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THE ORIGINS OF THE NATIONAL FRONT FOR THE
LIBERATION OF SOUTH VIET-NAM

by

Carlyle Alan Thayer

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
in the Department of International Relations,
Research School of Pacific Studies,
The Australian National University.

February 1977

This thesis is my own original work.

Carlyle A. Thayer

Carlyle A. Thayer

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Anyone who has completed a task as demanding as a Ph.D. thesis will readily acknowledge the sacrifices of one's family. Without the understanding, patience, encouragement and love of my wife, Zubeida Bibi Thayer nee Abdulla, this thesis might not have been completed.

Bendigo, Victoria
February 1977

ABSTRACT

Any examination of the origins of the National Front for the Liberation of South Viet-Nam must give prominence to the role of the Viet-Nam Workers' Party. During the period 1954-60 the VWP was enveloped in a continuing debate over how to achieve national unification. In 1954, despite disagreement within the VWP's Central Committee, it was decided to accept a negotiated settlement to the war. Accordingly the Party set out a two-year policy of political struggle synchronized with the various provisions of the Geneva Agreements. The VWP saw its tasks in each zone as being fundamentally different: priority was given to socialist construction in the north, while cadres in the south were expected to carry out a people's national democratic revolution.

Implementation of this new policy in the south was hampered by the growing strength of the Diem government, and by the failure of VWP diplomacy to secure either French or Russian commitment to general elections. The failure to hold consultations in July 1955 led to growing southern disenchantment. In September 1955 the Fatherland Front was created. Its program in effect recognized the need for a policy of political struggle based on something other than the Geneva Agreements.

This policy proved difficult to implement. Although alliances of convenience were forged with the armed forces of the dissident sects, the Diem regime proved successful in meeting and overcoming this challenge. By late 1956 southern pressures for increased use of revolutionary violence coincided with failures in conducting land reform in the north. These

circumstances led to leadership changes in which the southern lobby was given an increased voice. The immediate result was the drafting of another long-range policy. Political struggle was given renewed emphasis but a limited policy of "extermination of traitors" was permitted. The prime task was to rebuild the Party organization. This policy was carried out during 1957-58 at which time great efforts were made to consolidate the north and to win international sympathy and support.

In 1959 the southern lobby argued convincingly for a new policy sanctioning reunification "by all appropriate means". This meant the use of armed forces. This new policy of combining political and armed struggle was ratified at the VWP's 3rd National Congress in September 1960. The growing influence of the southerners was evident in leadership appointments to the Politburo, Secretariat and Central Committee. Le Duan, the outspoken advocate for armed struggle, became the Party's First Secretary. The 3rd National Congress committed the entire VWP to carrying out the people's national democratic revolution in the south. Southern cadres set about creating a national united front and regroupees in the north began returning south. In December 1960 an organizing committee met and proclaimed the formation of the NFLSVN. Over a year later, after much organizational work, the First Congress of the NFLSVN was held. The origins of this Front lie both in the interaction between contending factions within the VWP leadership and the interaction between the VWP and various southern social forces and personalities on the one hand, and the Diem regime and its American backers on the other.

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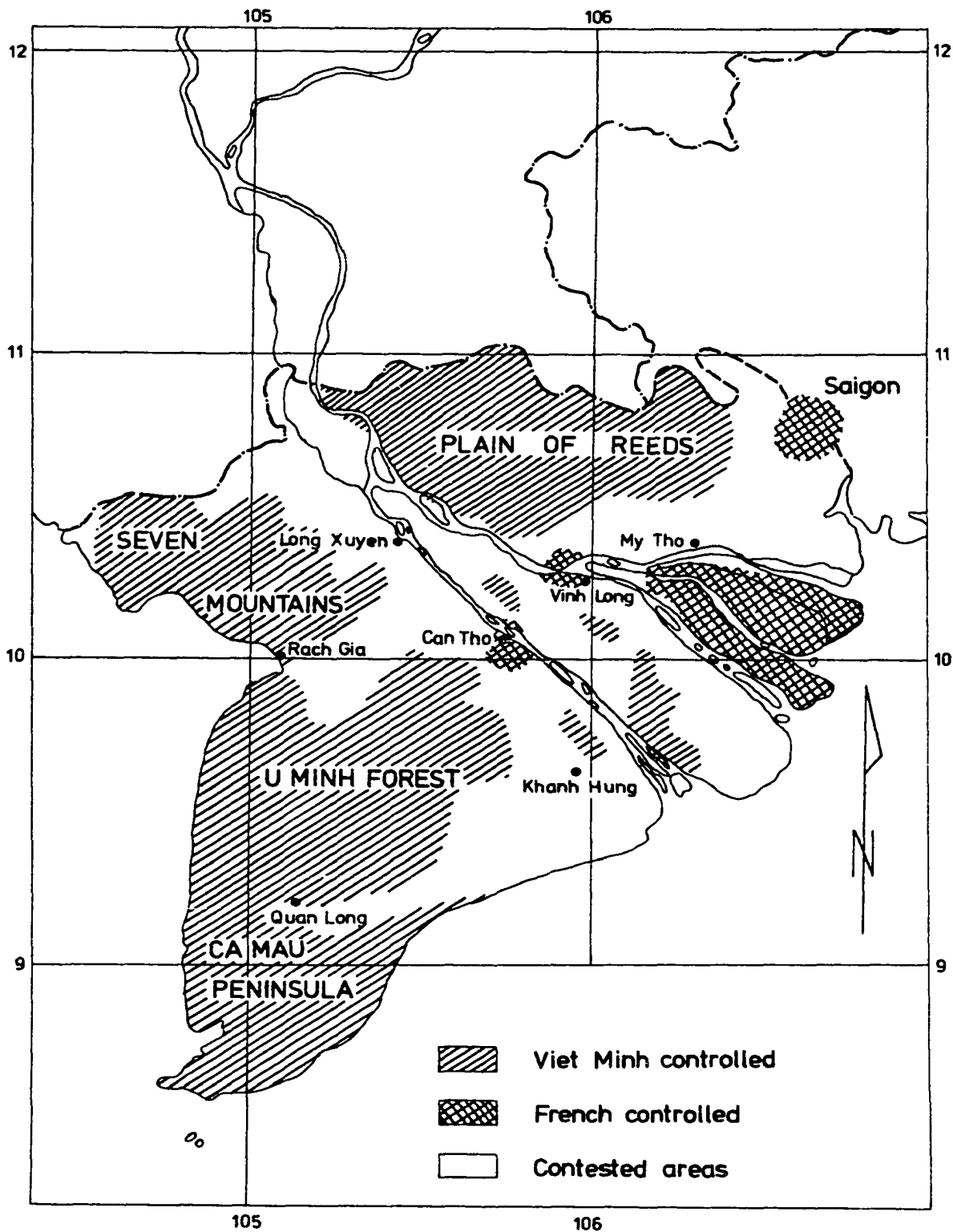
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MAP 0-1



Mekong Delta, Viet Minh - French
Controlled Areas, 1953 - 54

"It is much too soon to think of writing a definitive account of the origins of the movement which has come to be known as the 'Viet Cong'. The principal sources for such an account are the large quantities of documentary material captured by the South Vietnamese authorities and by the Americans during this past decade, and it will be some time before all of this material is available to scholars with no official responsibilities, and even longer before it has been thoroughly sifted and analysed".

Ralph B. Smith, writing in
April 1968.

PART I

POLITICAL STRUGGLE

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I. CONTENDING INTERPRETATIONS

On December 20, 1960 an organizing committee of Vietnamese revolutionaries met somewhere in eastern Nam Bo (southern Viet-Nam) and declared the foundation of the National Front for the Liberation of South Viet-Nam (NFL).¹ The significance of this event is that it formalized a process which had been underway to shift the tactics of the revolutionary movement from political to military struggle. The birth of the NFL, therefore, marked a new stage in the history of Viet-Nam Workers' Party (VWP).² After nearly six years of trying to unify the country by peaceful means (under the provisions of the 1954 Geneva Conference), by political means (designed to exploit the "contradictions" in

¹ In Vietnamese: Mat Tran Dan Toc Giai Phong Mien Nam Viet Nam. The expression for "south", mien nam could be more correctly rendered by "southern" but because of common useage the former will be retained.

² The Viet-Nam Workers' Party, Dang Lao Dong Viet Nam, is the present designation for the Communist Party of Viet-Nam, Viet-Nam Cong San Dang, founded by Ho Chi Minh in Hong Kong on February 3, 1930. The Party changed its name in October 1930 to the Indochinese Communist Party, Dong Duong Cong San Dang, at the request of the Comintern. On November 11, 1945, ostensibly for tactical reasons, the Indochinese Communist Party dissolved itself. Comrades with a theoretical interest in Marxism were invited to join the Marxist Studies Group (or Association). The Party reappeared on February 11, 1951 as the Viet-Nam Workers' Party (VWP). In order to avoid confusion the term Party will be used to refer to all of the above groups. Lao Dong Party and Viet-Nam Workers' Party will be used interchangeably for stylistic reasons.

South Viet-Nam) and through political violence (support to armed sect dissidents; and armed propaganda, including political assassinations) the VWP leadership reached the conclusion that a major reorientation of the revolutionary movement was necessary. The new aim was the liberation of South Viet-Nam³ from the yoke of the "My-Diem regime"⁴ by a combination of political and military forces grouped under the umbrella of a new united front, the NFL.

The formation of the NFL soon acquired international significance. A month later in January 1961, John F. Kennedy was inaugurated President of the United States. Upon assuming office he was confronted with the text of a speech made by the Soviet Premier N.S. Khrushchev, in support of wars of national liberation. The new American President linked the situation in Viet-Nam (and Laos) to this statement and concluded that such wars were a new instrument of Soviet policy designed to upset the status quo and thus alter the global balance of power.⁵ Accordingly

³ The term here, as will become apparent from the following discussion, refers to a geographical area created as a result of the partition of Viet-Nam in 1954. It is not synonymous with either the State of Viet-Nam or the Republic of Viet-Nam which are expressions referring to two governments claiming to exercise authority over the territory of South Viet-Nam.

⁴ "My-Diem" is a derogatory short-hand expression coined by opponents of the Republic of Viet-Nam. It means "American-Ngo Dinh Diem" on the face of it but according to Dennis Duncanson it also carries the innuendo "strumpet"; see: Government and Revolution in Vietnam (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p.401.

⁵ Khrushchev's speech was delivered on January 6, 1961. According to Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "[Khrushchev's] elaborate speech...made a conspicuous impression on the new President, who took it as an authoritative exposition of Soviet intentions, discussed it with his staff, and

cont'd

counter-insurgency planning become the order of the day as American crisis-managers studied ways of coping with this new threat to international order and security. One of the first American responses was to increase military and economic aid to the Republic of Viet-Nam (RVN)⁶ in order to bolster the beleaguered government of Ngo Dinh Diem.

In late 1961 the United States government issued a White Paper entitled "A Threat to Peace - North Viet-Nam's Effort to Conquer South Viet-Nam"⁷ to justify its actions. According to this document:

The content and methods of Viet Cong political activity leave no doubt as to its Communist orientation. In a transparent effort to give their movement a cloak of respectability and of popular support, the so-called "Front for Liberation of the South" was formed late last year. Within the front are separate "liberation" organizations - for youth, for the peasants, for workers, for intellectuals, for women, indeed for every significant segment of society in South Vietnam.

5 cont'd

read excerpts from it aloud to the National Security Council"; see: A Thousand Days (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1965), pp.302-303. See also the reference to "Khrushchev's 'wars of liberation'" in a letter of transmittal which accompanied the report written by Maxwell D. Taylor to the President after a study trip to Viet-Nam quoted in Senator Mike Gravel, editor, The Pentagon Papers: The Defense Department History of United States Decision-making on Vietnam (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), Vol.2, p.98.

⁶ As a result of a referendum conducted on October 23, 1955 the State of Viet-Nam was declared a Republic. The State of Viet-Nam, (SVN), headed by Bao Dai, was created on January 1, 1950.

⁷ United States Department of State, A Threat to Peace - North Viet-Nam's Effort To Conquer South Viet-Nam (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, December 1961), in two parts.

However, seized documents, propaganda pamphlets, and indoctrination leaflets picked up throughout South Viet-Nam make clear that the Lao Dong (Workers) Party, that is, the Communist Party, is the vanguard of the 'liberation' movement. As those familiar with the Communist movement know, this means that the 'liberation' movement is directed by the Communist Party. The Lao Dong Party of the South is part of and controlled by Ho Chi Minh's Lao Dong Party in the North.

The Viet Cong organization in the South follows the familiar Communist pattern. The basic unit is the cell of a few persons in a village or neighborhood. Village units are subordinate to the district headquarters and these in turn are controlled by the provincial party headquarters. Above the latter are the regional or zonal headquarters which take their directions from Hanoi.

The pattern of political indoctrination is what one would expect - concentration on studies of 'socialism' meaning communism; praise for and identification with the program and progress of the Ho regime in the North; promises of support for the 'liberation' movement by the 'socialist camp'; of the 'imperialists', 'warmongers', and 'colonialists' and their 'puppets'.

Through their propaganda the Viet Cong seek to appeal to every group in the South with promises of special attention - 'autonomy' for minority tribal groups, land and freedom from usury for the peasants, education for the youth, 'freedom' for the intellectuals, and so forth.

In addition to the party organization itself, close ties are maintained with the military units through a system of political officers assigned to all units down to the platoon. They provide additional eyes and ears for the military units, supplying reports on GVN [i.e. Republic of Viet-Nam] military establishments and troop movements. They may be assigned to collect money or to gather food for the Viet Cong.⁸

Elsewhere the White Paper provided details concerning the infiltration of political and military cadres as well as supplies from the North to the Communist underground in the South. In later years this view about the control

⁸ Ibid., Part i, pp.10-11.

and direction of the Communist movement in southern Viet-Nam would lead the United States to undertake a campaign of covert operations against the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam (DRVN). Infiltration routes through Laos would be bombed, cross border hit-and-run raids would be conducted and retaliatory acts of sabotage would be carried out.

Needless to say the decision of the United States government to intensify its military commitment to the RVN was a controversial one. As the facts became public a global debate erupted over the justifications advanced by the Americans for their actions. Echoes of this debate resounded across Australia as the government of the day decided to follow the American lead.

One of the most contentious issues concerned the origins of the NFL. According to a second American White Paper published in 1965:

The National Front for the Liberation of South Viet-Nam is the screen behind which the Communists carry out their program of conquest. It is the creature of the Communist government in Hanoi. As noted above the Communist Party in the North demanded establishment of such a 'front' three months before its formation was actually announced in December 1960. It was designed to create the illusion that the Viet Cong campaign of subversion was truly indigenous to South Viet-Nam rather than an externally directed Communist plan.⁹

Critics of the official American interpretation stressed the indigenous nature of the Front's leadership and the importance of Diemist repression in the formation of the

⁹ United States Department of State, Aggression From the North: The Record of North Viet-Nam's Campaign To Conquer South Viet-Nam (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1965), p.22. For an Australian equivalent see: Commonwealth of Australia, Department of External

cont'd

NFL. George Kahin and John Lewis argued for example:

In sum, the insurrection is Southern rooted; it arose at Southern initiative in response to Southern demands. The Liberation Front gave political articulation and leadership to the widespread reaction against the harshness and heavy handedness of Diem's government. It gained drive under the stimulus of Southern Vietminh veterans who felt betrayed by the Geneva Conference and abandoned by Hanoi. After the withdrawal of their troops to the North these Southern Vietminh were left with no effective means for enforcing the political terms of the armistice - either the conducting of the elections or protection against reprisal. They were denied the promised opportunity to reassert their political ascendancy through elections and then savagely persecuted for their past political affiliations. Not surprisingly, they lost patience with the communist North and finally took matters into their own hands. Hanoi, despite its reluctance, was then obliged to sanction the Southerners' actions or risk forfeiting all chance of influence over the course of events in South Vietnam.¹⁰

Communist historians have chosen to explain the origins of the NFL in this way:

Against this background of constant revolt and multiform struggle on a national scale [by various social forces in South Viet-Nam between 1954-60], the necessity urgently arises of a mustering of all forces of opposition operating together according to a common plan. The setting up of a national front of struggle for the liberation of the country from powerful foreign grip and an ever tougher arbitrariness, stems from a common will. The great enthusiasm with which millions of people have greeted the founding of the South Viet Nam Liberation National Front has no other origin, the more so as the latter is not even obliged to act clandestinely.¹¹

9 cont'd

Affairs, Studies on Viet Nam (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, August 1965), Information Handbook No.1 of 1965. These reports were preceded by: Republic of Viet-Nam, Violations of the Geneva Agreements by the Viet-Minh Communists (Saigon, July 1959) and Violations of the Geneva Agreements by the Viet-Minh Communists: From July 1959 to June 1960 (Saigon, July 1960).

¹⁰ George McT. Kahin and John W. Lewis, The United States in Vietnam (New York: Dell Publishing Company, Revised Edition 1969), p.119.

¹¹ Tran Van Giau and Le Van Chat, The South Viet Nam Liberation National Front (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962), pp.23-24.

II. LEGALITIES AND SEMANTICS

It is not the purpose of this thesis to determine which of these views is correct; but to provide an alternate framework of analysis which takes into account the following three factors: (1) the role of the Viet-Nam Workers' Party, (2) socio-political conditions in South Viet-Nam and (3) the influence of the international environment. A new framework of analysis is necessary because the early debate on the origins of the NFL was greatly influenced by legal arguments arising out of conflicting interpretations of the 1954 Geneva Agreements. At issue was whether or not South Viet-Nam was a sovereign state bound by the political provisions of the Geneva Agreements.¹² The view of the SVN and American governments was that South Viet-Nam was a sovereign state and therefore not bound by any of the terms of the Geneva Agreements. The counter-view held by DRVN officials, was that the SVN, as a successor state to one of the signatories (i.e. France), was bound by the terms of the 1954 Agreements.

A major objection to this legal framework is that the acceptance of one argument over the other implies approval of the actions of one party and condemnation of the actions of the other. Specifically, if one accepts the argument that South Viet-Nam was a sovereign state not bound by the provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreements then the actions by other parties (VWP cadres, DRVN officials, etc.) to bring

¹² A variety of the arguments, pro and con, have been conveniently gathered in Richard A. Falk, editor, The Vietnam War and International Law (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), Vol.I. These issues are dealt with particular force by Wesley R. Fishel, "One Vietnam or Two? A New Look at an Old Question", Virginia Quarterly Review (Summer 1974), Vol.50, No.3, pp.348-367.

about their (the Agreement's) implementation or as retaliation for breach of their implementation appear either as acts of aggression or rebellion against a legally constituted government. On the other hand, if one accepts the view that the State of Viet-Nam was bound by the terms of the 1954 Geneva Agreements but refused to implement them, then the actions by the aggrieved parties appear justified. This thesis is not concerned with assessing the justice or legal merits of either case as an explanation of the origins of the NFL. Rather this thesis focuses on the perceptions of the contending parties and the implications that these differing perceptions had on subsequent political developments.

This approach directly confronts a basic semantic problem which bedevils all discussion of contemporary Vietnamese politics.¹³ What is really meant by the terms "North Vietnamese", "South Vietnamese" and "Viet Cong"?

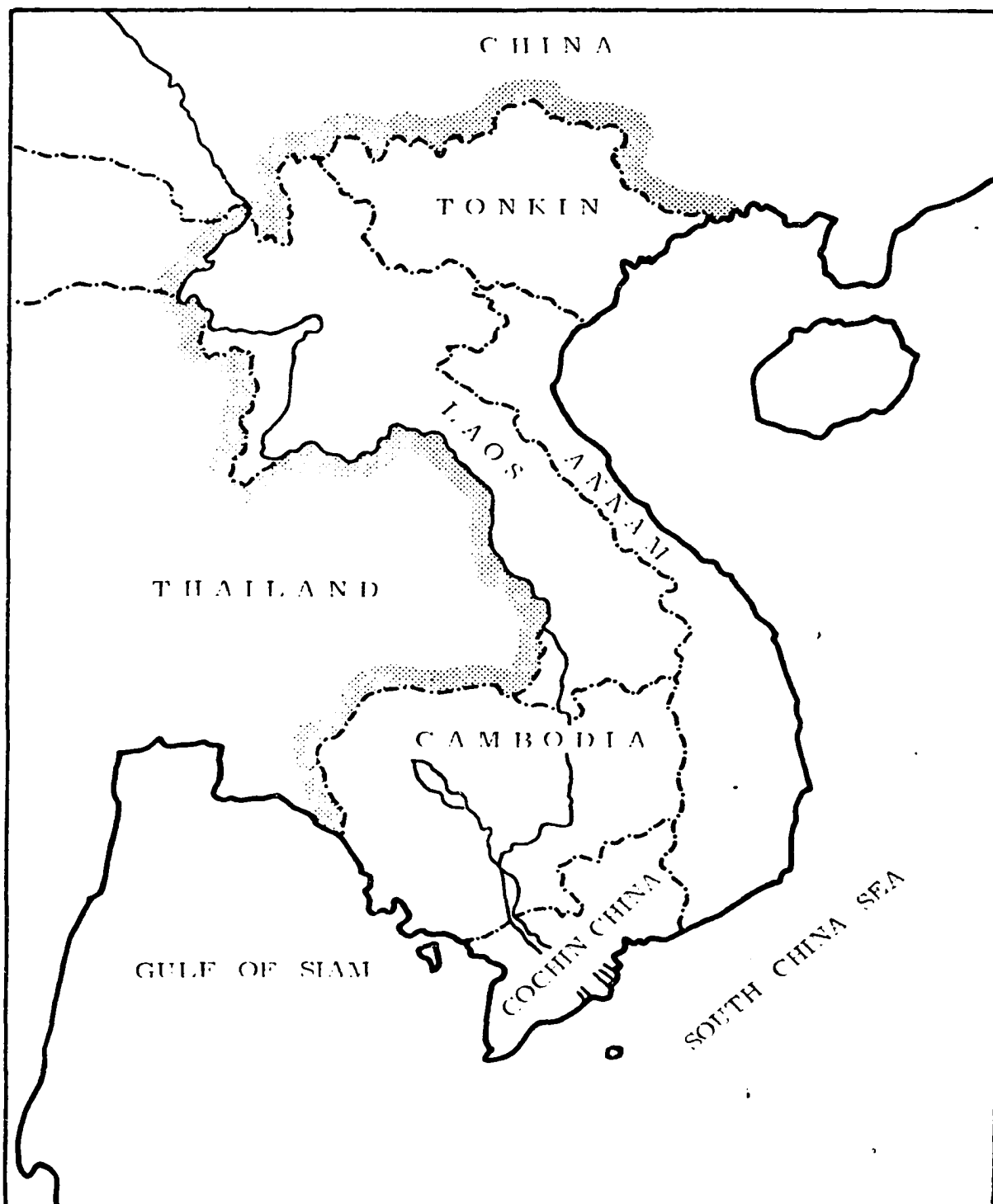
During nearly eighty years of French colonial rule the country of Viet-Nam was divided into three administrative regions: Tonkin (roughly the Red River Delta area in the north), Annam (roughly the territory between the 11th and 20th parallels in the centre) and Cochinchina (roughly corresponding to the Mekong Delta area in the south (see Map I-1). These divisions resulted from the sequence of French occupation.¹⁴ They did not reflect the separation

¹³ These arguments have appeared elsewhere, see: Carlyle A. Thayer, "The PRG and the Unification of Viet-Nam", Dyason House Papers (June 1975), Vol.I, No.5, pp.1-5.

¹⁴ Joseph Buttinger, Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1967), Vol.I, pp.3-42 and Virginia Thompson, French Indo-China (New York: Octagon Books, 1968), pp.58-108.

MAP I-1

FRENCH DIVISIONS OF INDOCHINA TO 1954



SOURCE: "Viet-Cong Political Geography of South Viet-Nam",
Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes (March 1971)
No.93, p.4.

of distinct nationalities as is often assumed.¹⁵

This is not to say however that there were no pre-existing regional differences among the Vietnamese people. Indeed the diverse pattern of settlement created during the prolonged migration southward (Nam Tien) resulted in differences of dialect and village social organization among Vietnamese¹⁶ (see Map I-2). Occasionally the unity of the central court was threatened by regional secession.

The French colonial experience exacerbated some of these regional variations, especially in the south.¹⁷ There new patterns of landholding were created as a result of French

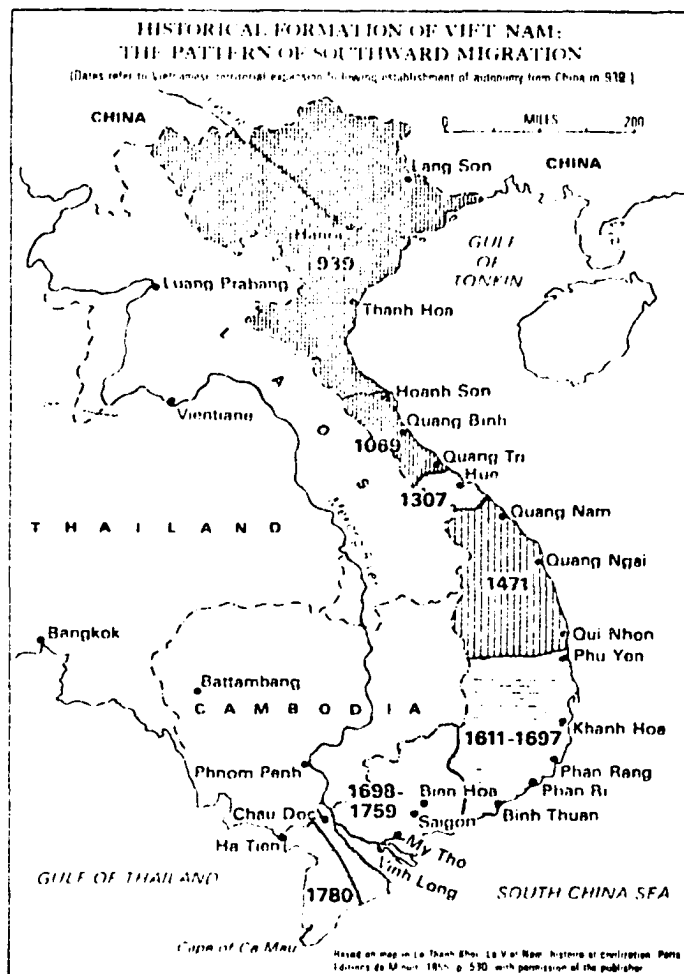
¹⁵ Virginia Thompson, op.cit., refers to the Vietnamese as "Annamites" throughout her study. The United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service in its Daily Reports used to label its transcriptions from Viet-Nam as being broadcast in Tonkinese, Annamese or Cochinchinese. The unity of the Vietnamese as a people and as a nation is attested to by publications produced in both Hanoi and Saigon; see: Viet Nam: A Historical Sketch (Hanoi: Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organization, n.d.); Viet Nam - A Sketch (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1971); Nguyen Phut Tan, A Modern History of Vietnam (Saigon: Khai Tri, 1964); and An Introduction to Vietnam (Saigon: The Vietnam Council on Foreign Relations, 1969).

¹⁶ Michael G. Cotter, "Towards a Social History of the Vietnamese Southward Movement", Journal of Southeast Asian History (March 1968), Vol.9, No.1, pp.12-24; and John T. McAlister, Jr. and Paul Mus, The Vietnamese and Their Revolution (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp.78-92.

¹⁷ Milton E. Osborne, The French Presence in Cochinchina and Cambodia Rule and Response (1859-1905) (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), pp.59-174; R.B. Smith, "Bui Quang Chieu and the Constitutionalist Party in French Cochinchina, 1917-30", Modern Asian Studies (1969), Vol.3, No.2, pp.131-150; Milton E. Osborne, "The Faithful Few: The Politics of Collaboration in Cochinchina in the 1920s", in Walter F. Vella, editor, Aspects of Vietnamese History, Asian Studies at Hawaii No. 8, (1973), pp.160-190; R.B. Smith, "The Development of Opposition to French Rule in Southern Vietnam, 1880-1940", Past and Present (February 1972), No.54, pp.94-129; and R.B. Smith, "The Vietnamese Elite of French Cochinchina, 1943", Modern Asian Studies (1972), Vol.6, No.4, pp.459-482.

MAP I-2

HISTORICAL FORMATION OF VIET-NAM:
THE PATTERN OF SOUTHWARD MIGRATION



SOURCE: John T. McAlister, Jr., Viet-Nam: The Origins of Revolution, p.25.

efforts to open up the delta. As the south (Cochinchina) was the first territory to come under French administration it experienced the impact of French civilization over a more prolonged period than the other two regions. Politically, the south was governed as a direct colony. Nevertheless the political divisions which arose in Viet-Nam after the Second World War were not North-South differences but differences between Vietnamese throughout the entire country.¹⁸

In 1954 the decision to partition Viet-Nam at the 17th parallel was made in preference to the so-called "leopard spot" solution which would have seen opposing forces concentrated into the areas they controlled on the ground.¹⁹ The partitioning of Viet-Nam, which was protested by representatives of the State of Vietnam at the time,²⁰ was supposed to have been temporary and solely to enable the regroupment of opposing military forces. According to the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference:

The Conference recognizes that the essential purpose of the agreement relating to Vietnam is to settle military questions with a view to ending hostilities and that the military demarcation line is provisional and should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary.²¹

¹⁸ The "Republic of Cochinchina" notwithstanding; see: Ellen J. Hammer, The Struggle for Indochina, 1940-1955 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), pp.168-169.

¹⁹ The "leopard spot" solution had been broached by the French as a possible solution; see: Philippe Devillers and Jean Lacouture, End of a War: Indochina, 1954 (London: Pall Mall Press, 1969), pp.206-207.

²⁰ Fishel, "One Vietnam or Two?", op.cit., pp.357-360.

²¹ Point 6 of the Final Declaration in Great Britain, Further Documents Relating to the Discussion of Indochina at the Geneva Conference, Miscellaneous No.20 (1954), Command Papers

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As history has recorded the "military demarcation line" became in fact a political boundary. This boundary, it should be noted, cut across regional and political loyalties. Henceforth the information and propaganda arms of the United States and Republic of Viet-Nam governments employed the terms "North Vietnamese" and "South Vietnamese" to differentiate Vietnamese people living in either regroupment zone. It should be noted that this interpretation conforms to only one view of these events.²² In English the terms "North Vietnamese" and "South Vietnamese" are misleading for they combine two meanings: (1) region of birth and (2) political affiliation.

With regard to the first meaning it should be noted that under the terms of the 1954 Geneva Agreements a regroupment of civilians took place which saw the migration to the south of nearly 900,000 persons. Some 129,000 others regrouped to the north. What is the correct terminology for these people? The terms "North Vietnamese" and "South Vietnamese" ignore the centrists²³ (central Viet-

21 cont'd

Cmd. 9239 (London: Great Britain Parliamentary Sessional Papers, XXXI, 1953-1954), pp.9-11.

²² William S. Turley has put the matter succinctly in a brief discussion on the People's Army of Viet-Nam (PAVN): "'VPA', for Vietnam People's Army, also is an acceptable translation of the Vietnamese, Quan doi Nhan dan Viet-nam. 'North Vietnamese Army (NVA)' is not a translation of any term used in the DRV but rather an attempt, in which journalists and common useage have acquiesced, to label organizations in a way consistent with official American and Saigon interpretations of the war". See: "The Political Role and Development of the People's Army of Vietnam", in Joseph J. Zasloff and Macalister Brown, editors, Communism in Indochina: New Perspectives (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Co., 1975). p.158.

²³ The terms "centrist" and "central Vietnamese" while not often employed in English-language writing on Viet-Nam are

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name) whose region was split by the military demarcation line. In other words centrists who remained north of the 17th parallel were called, after 1954-55, "North Vietnamese" whereas centrists who remained in the south were called "South Vietnamese". There can be no doubt, whatever the intentions of RVN and US officials who used the term "South Vietnamese", that southerners in the Mekong Delta viewed the northern and centrist refugees as outsiders. Thus the expressions "North Vietnamese" and "South Vietnamese" to describe a person's region of birth are misleading in that they did not accord with contemporary useage in the period 1954-60.²⁴

The terms "North Vietnamese" and "South Vietnamese" are equally misleading when used to describe a person's political affiliation. As both expressions have been used in Western writing on Viet-Nam, a "North Vietnamese" is supposed to be a person who is loyal to either or both the VWP or DRVN government. Similarly, a "South Vietnamese" is supposed to be a person who is loyal to the Republic of Viet-Nam. Unfortunately the latter term ignores the fact that as many as three million persons resided in so-called

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common terms in Vietnamese reflecting no doubt a cultural perception shared by native speakers. This perception is tacitly acknowledged in the vocabulary and language drills contained in the United States Department of State, Foreign Service Institute's Vietnamese Basic Course, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), Vol.II, pp.44-45 and 311.

²⁴ For example, both Ngo Dinh Diem and Vo Nguyen Giap were born in the central Vietnamese province of Quang Binh. After partition Quang Binh was located north of the seventeenth parallel. See: Bernard B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams: A Political and Military Analysis (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967 Revised Edition), p.325 and United States Central Intelligence Agency, Who's Who in North Vietnam (November 1972), p.106.

liberated areas, that is areas under the control of the DRVN's war-time administrative structure, south of the 17th parallel at the time of partition.²⁵ These centrists and southerners expected reunification elections to take place in 1956. However, because their military forces had regrouped to the north they were in a very poor position to resist the imposition of RVN authority which was often accompanied by the use of force. In order to distinguish them from loyal "South Vietnamese" the term "Viet Cong" was invented.²⁶

²⁵ Pham Van Dong provided the estimate of three million persons in the liberated areas south of the 17th parallel to Wilfred Burchett in an interview published in The Daily Worker (July 26, 1954), p.4.; this accords with figures extrapolated from French and American intelligence estimates discussed at greater length elsewhere in this thesis. An estimate of two million was provided by Joseph Alsop, "A Reporter at Large", The New Yorker (June 25, 1955), Vol. XXXI, No.19, p.35.

²⁶ According to Hoang Van Chi, "(t)o distinguish between Vietminh as a national movement and the Vietnamese communists, the press in Saigon since 1956 has referred to the latter as 'Vietcong', Cong (an abbreviation of Cong-san) standing for 'communists'. The new term is precise and accurate and, contrary to what many foreign correspondents believe, does not have any disparaging meaning". Chi, From Colonialism to Communism: A Case History of North Vietnam (New York: Popular Library, 1964), p.74; Bernard Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, op.cit., p.180 give a different impression: "(t)he disparaging term Viet-Cong (Vietnamese Communist) is used only by South Vietnamese [i.e. Republic of Viet-Nam officials] and American officials". D. Gareth Porter has written: "(i)n the same manual [a publication of the U.S. Civil Operations Revolutionary Development Support for use in training personnel for service in Vietnam] Chi even claimed credit for having 'created the term "Viet Cong" for Diem"'. See: "Testimony of D. Gareth Porter" in Hearing before the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary United States Senate, 93rd Congress, 1st Session, July 27, 1973. (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), p.6.

The use of the term "South Vietnamese" as opposed to "Viet Cong" is inappropriate as the meaning of the former explicitly combines region of birth and political affiliation whereas the latter only describes political affiliation. In other words this dichotomy implicitly suggests the notion of the legitimacy of the Republic of Viet-Nam as the terms "South Vietnamese" and "South Viet-Nam" fail to distinguish clearly between the concepts, country, nation and state.²⁷ A country is the whole territory of a nation. A nation is a stable, historically developed community of people with a territory, economic life, distinctive culture and language in common. A state is the governmental structure of an inhabited country which (1) has domestic legitimacy, (2) international recognition and (3) sovereignty.²⁸ "South Viet-Nam" in its geographical sense is part of the territory of the Vietnamese nation. In usage it is sometimes held to be synonymous with the Republic of Viet-Nam. This is incorrect for, as chapters

²⁷ Country and nation are used here in their ordinary sense, whereas state is given a more specialist definition; see: Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1964), p.338 and 997. International relations theory commonly distinguishes nation from state and it is this distinction which is at the heart of the matter; see: J. David Singer, "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations", in Klaus Knorr and Sidney Verba, editors, The International System: Theoretical Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp.77-92.

²⁸ Ivo D. Duchacek, Nations and Men: An Introduction to International Politics (Hinsdale, Illinois: The Dryden Press, Third Edition 1965), pp.14-30; for a discussion of sovereignty see: E. Raymond Platig, "International Relations as a Field of Inquiry", in Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, editor, Politics and the International System (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1972), pp.16-17 and Joseph Frankel, International Politics: Conflict and Harmony (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), pp.37-38.

2, 3 and 4 will demonstrate, the RVN was a government which did not exercise control over the entire territory of South Viet-Nam. The RVN in fact lacked complete domestic legitimacy and had only limited international recognition. Its sovereignty was likewise a matter of dispute. In the period 1954-60 the concept of a "South Vietnamese nationality" was premature to say the least.

"Viet Cong" a contraction from the Vietnamese "Viet Nam Cong San" means "Vietnamese Communist". It was coined in the mid-1950's to replace the expression "Viet Minh". "Viet Minh" in turn is a contraction of the Vietnamese Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi - League for the Independence of Viet Nam. The Viet Minh League (or Front) was founded in 1941 as a broad national united front led by the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) with the twin objectives of opposing Japanese fascism and French colonialism. Although the "Viet Minh" was officially merged with Hoi Lien Hiep Quoc Dan Viet Nam - or Lien Viet Front - in March 1951, it remained a popular common term denoting anti-French Vietnamese nationalists. Such expressions as the "Viet Minh" army or the "Viet Minh" government blurred over the existence of three distinct organizations: a party (the ICP), an army (People's Army of Viet-Nam) and a government (the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and its various levels of administration).

After the Resistance War (1945-54) ended the Diem government sought to undermine the nationalist appeal of the "Viet Minh" by referring instead to members of the war time resistance who did not rally to the RVN as "Viet Cong". In the mid to late 1950's in fact, the term "Viet Cong" referred to DRVN government officials, VWP cadres and

supporters of either organization resident throughout Viet-Nam.²⁹ Later, when the insurgency in the South picked up, the term "Viet Cong" was applied only to individuals in South Viet-Nam. DRVN officials, VWP cadres, and members of the People's Army of Viet-Nam in the north were now dubbed "North Vietnamese". Both terms gained popular acceptance in the West thus reinforcing the view that the war in Viet-Nam was basically a case of Communist aggression directed against the independent state of "South Viet-Nam". In fact during the years under consideration in this thesis the majority of the domestic opponents of the Diem regime were non-Communists to whom the appellation "Viet Cong" was totally inappropriate.³⁰ Jean Lacouture has written for example:

But the various national and religious forces that had been only wartime allies for the Vietnamese Communists did not consider themselves bound by

²⁹ For example a Vietnam Press (Saigon) dispatch in October 1956 referred to a DRVN delegation headed by Ton Duc Thang as a "Viet Cong Parliamentary group"; Vietnam Press, "Viet Cong Parliamentary Group to Leave for Moscow", The Times of Viet Nam Weekly (October 13, 1956), Vol.I, No.39, p.2.

³⁰ For example, Douglas Pike wrote the following in a memorandum to his publisher, "I suggest we name my book Viet Cong - not because the term is fully accurate (it is not) but because it will do what a title is supposed to do: tell the reader what the book is about". Pike, Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1966), p.xxii. Denis Warner, The Last Confucian: Vietnam, Southeast Asia and the West (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964), p.109, has written: "The introduction of repressive laws and ordinances did not strike Diem as likely to cause disaffection among the peasants. The laws were for evil-doers: and he was unaware that they were used to hound the innocent and also turn many of them more and more towards the Viet Cong, as the Viet Minh in South Vietnam was now called by his administration: the name simply means Vietnamese Communists".

these agreements and refused to bow before the commitments taken in the name of the guerillas by the Marxist leaders, or to yield to the authority of the new chief of government in Saigon, Ngo Dinh Diem. Soon the Ngo's family's 'witch hunting' policy no longer left open to the growing number of its opponents any alternatives other than prison, exile, or the guerilla forces. Soon future President [Phan Khac] Suu was in jail, all the former government chiefs were in exile, and many people who wanted primarily to escape the pursuit of Diem's police or Nhu's "Republican Youth" were in the guerilla forces. From then on the Saigon authorities called every dissatisfied person a communist or a Viet Cong.³¹

In order to avoid confusion and implicit bias the following conventions have been adopted (except by way of direct quotation). "North Viet-Nam" and "South Viet-Nam" will be used solely as geographical expressions for the territories created by the partitioning of Viet-Nam in 1954.³² When it is necessary to refer to a person's place of birth the expressions northerner, centrist and southerner will be employed. The terms "North Vietnamese" and "South Vietnamese" will not be used to describe a person's nationality or political loyalties. Instead it will be assumed that whatever the political divisions there is but one Vietnamese nationality. These allegiances will be identified as precisely as possible as the following examples will illustrate. "DRVN official" and "VWP cadre" will be used instead of "North Vietnamese official" and "North Vietnamese cadre". The term "RVN official" will be

³¹ Jean Lacouture, Vietnam: Between Two Truces (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), p.52.

³² One writer, for example, employs the terms "Northern Regroupment Zone" and "Southern Regroupment Zone" in place of "North Viet-Nam" and "South Viet-Nam" respectively; H.G. Slingsby, Vietnam Fights Back (Christchurch, New Zealand: Caxton Press, 1972), *passim*.

used in place of "South Vietnamese official", similarly the expression "RVN government" will replace "South Vietnamese government".³³

III. MODERNIZATION AND THE SEARCH FOR POLITICAL COMMUNITY

The conflict between various Vietnamese political groups which followed the division of Viet-Nam in 1954-55 must be placed in a broader context than the Cold War period. Otherwise there is a danger that the search for political community³⁴ in Viet-Nam, a concomitant of the modernization process, will be viewed simply as a clash between Communists and anti-Communists.

Traditional Viet-Nam was a society composed of autarkic villages loosely administered by the Imperial Court in Hue. According to Paul Mus,

The typical village of Viet Nam is enclosed within a thick wall of bamboo and thorny plants; the villagers used to live behind a kind of screen of bamboo, or perhaps it was more like living within the magic ring of a fairy tale. Supplying their needs from the surrounding fields, they kept to themselves behind their common protection, away from strangers, away even, from the State. For instance, when it came to taxes (there, as elsewhere, the State's chief concern) they still presented a united front. They paid their taxes as a group, and the community was recognizable. The villages dominated the landscape; they were the backbone of the nation. Yet each preserved an internal autonomy and autarky, with an economy based on local consumption. Before the Europeans arrived, the Chinese carried on what commerce there was.

³³ The expression "Government of Viet-Nam", abbreviated GVN, is often used in place of Republic of Viet-Nam. This term of course displays even greater bias.

³⁴ Political community is used here (and by McAlister) in the sense developed by Samuel P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp.8-24.

The traditional Vietnamese state was conventionalized in accordance with Confucian political thought; it was withdrawn behind a wall of Chinese characters. It was authoritarian, but it preserved a ritualistic distance between itself and its subjects. At the same time it intervened directly in village life by regulating the agricultural calendar and by imposing, through its rituals, attitudes and standards a deportment upon the group and the individual. By its right of inspection of village affairs the State guaranteed conformity to the models provided by Chinese tradition; the codifications of the Le dynasty, in the fifteenth century, are an outstanding example.

The traditional Vietnamese state kept its budgetary requirements to a minimum by governing through powers of verification and eventual repression, but not of execution. The responsibility for detailed implementation remained with the villages. The state was a coordinator, not an executive. Its object was to prevent the smaller communities from going astray, and its chief 'ministers' (the word does not have its European meaning) were a kind of high tribunal sitting in judgement upon lapses from the Confucian model. Therefore, the State recruited its personnel for all but the humblest positions from the literati; whose learning consisted entirely of Confucius, the classics, and their commentators.³⁵

As a result of the corrosive features of French colonialism the traditional dynastic state was emasculated while the autarky of local villages was undermined. Vietnamese society in Mus' memorable expression, was "thrown off-balance". Attempts by the literati (scholars) to rally around the Emperor failed as did their resort to armed resistance against the French.³⁶ Villages lost their autonomy as local society was atomized under the impact of French colonial administration. In brief the transformation

³⁵ The traditional dynastic state also took charge of raising an army and coordinating public works; McAlister and Mus, The Vietnamese and Their Revolution, op.cit., pp.31-35.

³⁶ David G. Marr, Vietnamese Anticolonialism 1885-1925 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp.44-76.

of the "great tradition" was set in motion.³⁷ Vietnamese scholars, like their Chinese counterparts, faced with the humiliation of colonial conquest, began searching for non-traditional solutions to their dilemma.³⁸

Why had the Court proved so easy a prey? What features of French society accounted for their success? How could Viet-Nam recover its independence? There were more questions than answers as Vietnamese scholars looked to China, Japan and the Soviet Union for solutions. Eventually reformism within the context of French political institutions yielded to revolutionary activism.³⁹ The pace of developments quickened in the early decades of the 20th Century.⁴⁰ In 1905 a revitalized Japan fought and won a modern naval engagement against Tzarist Russia. In 1911 Imperial China collapsed, in the wake of the Republican revolution. In 1917 the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia. Each of these events had repercussions in Viet-Nam as a variety of political groups became increasingly active.

³⁷ I am referring to a process described in great detail for China, Japan and Korea by John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Reischauer and Albert M. Craig in A History of East Asian Civilization (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1965), Vol.II, East Asia: The Modern Transformation, pp.4-10.

³⁸ Marr, Vietnamese Anticolonialism, op.cit., pp.77-184; David Marr, "Concepts of Harmony and Struggle in Prerevolutionary Vietnam", Paper delivered to the First Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia, The University of Melbourne (May 14-16, 1976).

³⁹ Marr, Vietnamese Anticolonialism, op.cit., pp.201-211.

⁴⁰ See: William J. Duiker, The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976); and Nguyen Dien, "Nationalism and Revolution in Vietnam in the 1920's and 1930's", Paper delivered to the First Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia, The University of Melbourne (May 14-16, 1976).

1930 marked a decisive turning point. Early in the year the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (Vietnamese Nationalist Party), a party modelled on the Chinese Kuo Min Tang, rose in unsuccessful revolt. The defeat of the VNQDD marked the end of purely anti-colonialist nationalism as a force capable of overthrowing the French. That same year Ho Chi Minh unified the various communist organizations into a single Indochinese Communist Party.⁴¹ Although ICP cadres were unsuccessful in their attempts to establish revolutionary soviets⁴² in central Viet-Nam during the second half of 1930, nevertheless the ICP managed to survive the political suppression which followed. With the advent of the Popular Front government in France, which permitted renewed political activity in Indochina, the ICP grew in strength. Thereafter the strands of anti-colonialism, Vietnamese nationalism, revolutionary modernization and Marxism-Leninism were combined in the hands of the ICP.

The ICP's rise to dominance was greatly facilitated by the events of World War II.⁴³ French Indochina was in no position to resist the might of Japan as France itself was under the heel of the Nazis. The colonial regime, like its

⁴¹ As was noted above the Indochinese Communist Party received its name in October 1930. In the period February-October the name of the party was the Communist Party of Viet-Nam.

⁴² William J. Duiker, "The Red Soviets of Nghe-Tinh: An Early Communist Rebellion in Vietnam", Journal of Southeast Asian Studies (September 1973), Vol.IV, No.2, pp.186-198; and Milton E. Osborne, "Continuity and Motivation in the Vietnamese Revolution: New Light from the 1930s", Pacific Affairs (Spring 1974), Vol.47, No.1, pp.37-55.

⁴³ For an overview of this period see: William J. Duiker, "Building the United Front: The Rise of Communism in Vietnam, 1925-1954", in Zasloff and Brown, editors, Communism in Indochina, op.cit., pp.3-26.

Vichy counterpart, collaborated with the occupying forces. This action insured that both Japanese fascism and French colonialism would become the objects of the war-time resistance. In 1941 Ho Chi Minh's ICP organized a broad national front known as the League for the Independence of Viet Nam with precisely these objectives. A miniscule military force was established⁴⁴ which later served as the seed from which other units would sprout.

Inevitably, as the tides of war turned against Tokyo, Japanese leaders in Indochina became suspicious of the French administration. After evidence began to accumulate that certain elements among the French community might belatedly take to arms, the Japanese launched a pre-emptive coup d'main. On March 5, 1945 the Japanese disarmed French forces and imprisoned them thus accomplishing what decades of revolutionary activism had been unable to achieve: the overthrow of the colonial regime. This dramatic event coupled with the obvious decline of Japanese military power elsewhere led Ho Chi Minh and his colleagues to the inescapable conclusion that it was necessary to plan to seize power. The aim, of course, would be to secure recognition from the Allied Powers while presenting France with a fait accompli.

Indeed while the Vietnamese revolutionaries were drafting their plans, the startling news of Japan's unconditional surrender reached them.⁴⁵ They immediately

⁴⁴ In fact the Viet Nam Liberation Army Propaganda Unit, under the command of Vo Nguyen Giap, was not established until December 22, 1944; An Outline History of the Viet Nam Workers' Party (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1970), p.36.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.39.

declared the formation of a provisional government and ordered the commencement of a country-wide general insurrection. The events which followed, since named the August Revolution,⁴⁶ witnessed the seizure of power by Vietnamese nationalists, including Communists, in all the major urban centres, including Hanoi, Hue and Saigon. Emperor Bao Dai, belatedly installed by the Japanese at the head of an "independent" Viet-Nam abdicated. On September 2, 1945 Ho Chi Minh declared Viet-Nam independent under the title of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. The DRVN government in fact included an amalgam of nationalist groups among whom the ICP and its Viet Minh Front were undoubtedly the strongest and most cohesive.⁴⁷

It is a moot question as to what form this government would have taken, for external forces once again decisively intervened in Vietnamese affairs. As a result of the Potsdam Conference the Allies decided to effect the surrender of Japanese forces in Indochina by dividing the country at the 16th parallel and by assigning the tasks to the Chinese Nationalists and British respectively. The Chinese army's occupation of the north brought in its wake the return to Viet-Nam of a variety of political groups who had

⁴⁶ History of the August Revolution (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1972); John T. McAlister, Jr., Viet Nam: The Origins of Revolution (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), pp.185-222; and Huynh Kim Khanh, "The Vietnamese August Revolution Reinterpreted", Journal of Asian Studies (August 1971), Vol.XXX, No.7, pp.761-782.

⁴⁷ I. Milton Sacks, Political Alignments of Vietnamese Nationalists, (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, Division of Research for Far East, Office of Intelligence Research; October 1, 1949), OIR Report No.3708, pp.75-100.

spent the war in exile.⁴⁸ In the south British General Gracey refused to deal with the Vietnamese authorities.⁴⁹ He released the imprisoned French and permitted them to re-establish their rule. Thus the ultimate aims of the August Revolution were thwarted. The Allied powers neither prevented the French from returning to Viet-Nam nor did they grant recognition to the DRVN.

As a result of various negotiations⁵⁰ between the French, Vietnamese and Chinese, the latter withdrew from northern Viet-Nam. French troops were permitted to return. It was also agreed that they would be progressively withdrawn over a five-year period and that a referendum would be held in the South to determine whether it would opt to join an independent Viet-Nam. However the nationalist camp began to break up. Extremists condemned Ho Chi Minh for not taking to arms. Anti-Communists split with Communists. Politicians out of the centre of power intrigued to undermine those in power. Politico-religious sects in the south consolidated their power on a territorial basis, creating "states within a state". Members of the bureaucracy, and pro-French groups sought to side with the colonial authorities. Monarchists hankered for a return of the Emperor. Nationalist political

⁴⁸ King C. Chen, Vietnam and China 1938-1954 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp.99-154; Interview with Ambassador Yuan Tze-chien, Taipei, May 11, 1972. Ambassador Yuan was with the Chinese Consulate in Hanoi during this period; he later served as the ambassador of the Republic of China to the Republic of Viet-Nam (1956-64).

⁴⁹ George Rosie, The British in Vietnam: How the Twenty-Five Year War Began (London: Panther Books Ltd., 1970); and Dennis J. Duncanson, "General Gracey and the Vietminh", Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society (October 1968), Vol.LV, Part III, pp.288-297.

⁵⁰ Hammer, The Struggle for Indochina, op.cit., pp.148-174.

parties attempted to entrench themselves in local areas. The disunity of the nationalist camp and the shift in the balance of forces as France reestablished her pre-war presence made the grant of complete Vietnamese independence remote. Tensions on either side, which built up in a series of incidents in late 1946, finally exploded into open warfare. Ho Chi Minh and his government and party colleagues took to the mountains and began an eight year long protracted resistance against the French.

The return of the French to Viet-Nam and the start of the Resistance War postponed the resolution of the conflict among Vietnamese groups as to which form the modernization of Vietnamese political institutions should take. Nevertheless this process of modernization was an important undercurrent of the larger conflict between Communist-led anti-colonial nationalism on the one hand and the forces of French colonialism and anti-Communist nationalism on the other. During the Resistance War a radical transformation occurred in areas of the countryside under the domination of the Communist Party.⁵¹

Through the Viet Minh and Lien Viet fronts as well as the People's Army of Viet Nam (PAVN) and the administrative

⁵¹ McAlister, The Origins of Revolution, op.cit., pp.256-272 and 319-364; for descriptions of the governmental structure of the DRVN during wartime see: George Ginsburgs, "Local Government and Administration Under the Viet-Minh, 1945-54", in P.J. Honey, editor, North Vietnam Today (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), pp.135-165; George Modelski, "The Viet Minh Complex", in Cyril E. Black and Thomas P. Thornton, editors, Communism and Revolution: The Strategic Uses of Political Violence (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp.185-214; and Bernard B. Fall, The Viet-Minh Regime: Government and Administration in the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1956).

structure of the DRVN government, Viet-Nam's political institutions were modernized and the "imbalance" in village society restored. Not only was village self-sufficiency re-created within the framework of larger "free" (liberated) zones, but the superstructure of central control was once again re-imposed. These developments occurred throughout all the regions of Viet-Nam (see Map I-3).

In short the Communist Party mobilized millions of rural folk into modern organizations with specific social, political and economic goals. A new leadership hierarchy was created in the villages. These intervening organizations coupled with the introduction of revolutionary values proved to be self-sustaining in the face of external stress. A new "Vietnamese political community" was created which replaced the decimated vestiges of the traditional dynastic state.⁵²

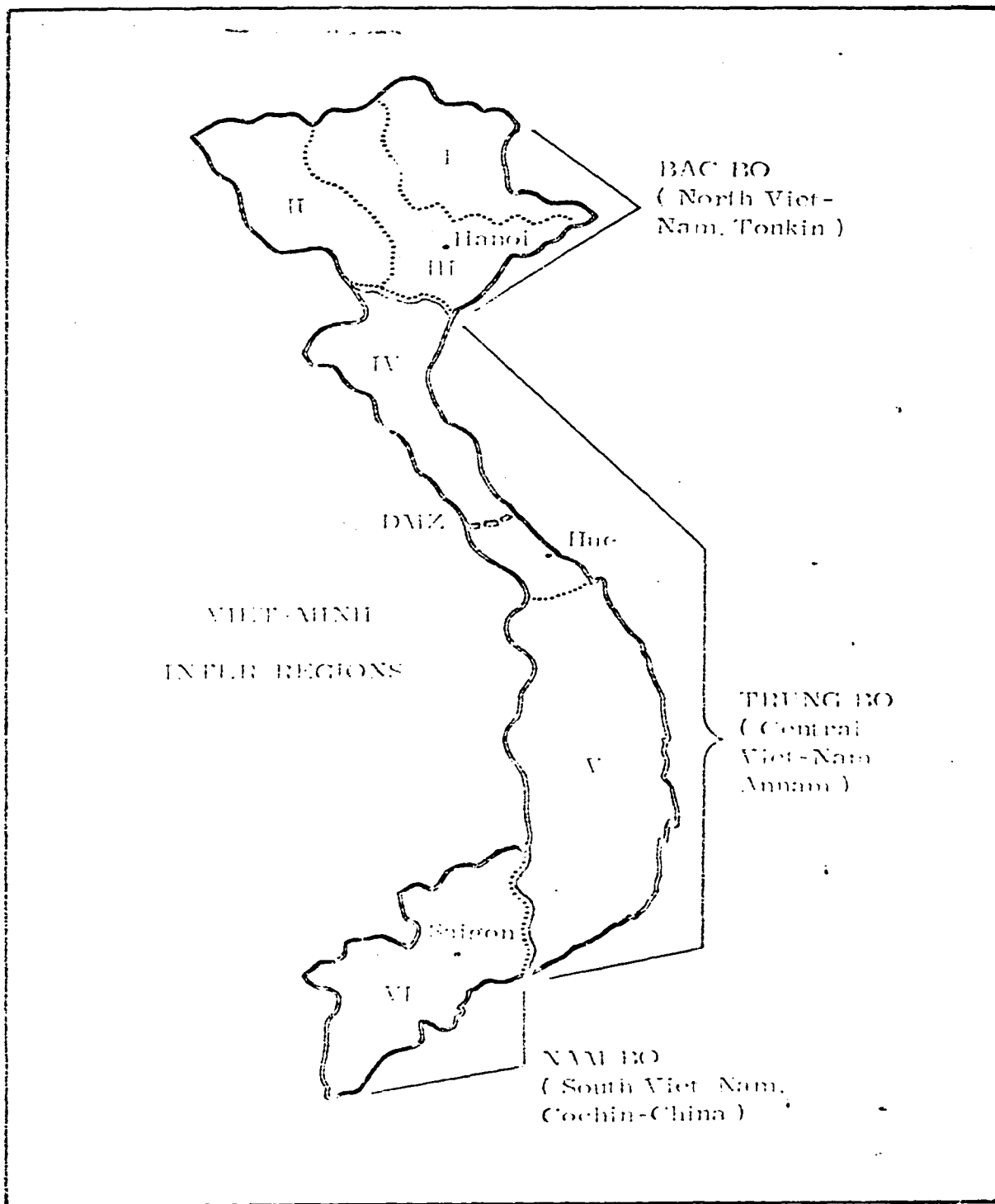
The end of the Resistance War did not mark the resolution of the conflict of which model of political development⁵³ the Vietnamese would choose. The 1954 Geneva Agreements, despite their references to a political settlement, merely brought about a ceasefire and the withdrawal of the French Expeditionary Corps. With its departure the colonial political model ceased to exist as a viable option. The French exit set the stage for a

⁵²This process had already been observed by Paul Mus in the 1950's; see: McAlister and Mus, The Vietnamese and Their Revolution, op.cit., pp.111-127.

⁵³ For a discussion of the salient features of the Vietnamese model see: Bob Catley and Bruce McFarlane, "The Vietnamese Social Model", The Australian Quarterly (December 1974), Vol.46, No.4, pp.22-37; for a current view, Mark Selden, "People's War and the Transformation of Peasant Society: China and Vietnam", in Edward Friedman and Mark Selden, editors, America's Asia: Dissenting Essays on Asian-American Relations (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), pp.357-392.

MAP I-3

INTER-REGIONS DURING THE RESISTANCE WAR (1948-1954)



SOURCE: "Viet-Cong Political Geography of South Viet-Nam",
Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes (March 1971),
 No.93, p.6.

resumption of the domestic conflict. In the south vast areas of the countryside were not under the control of the State of Viet-Nam. These included warlord fiefs of the various sect generals⁵⁴ as well as the liberated areas still administered by the Communists. In the urban areas, the main base of the State of Viet-Nam, political division reigned similarly. On the one hand were the forces of republicanism led by Ngo Dinh Diem; on the other hand were a variety of forces, some pro-French, others pro-monarchist opposed to Diem. By May 1955 the urban conflict had been resolved in favour of Diem, who then turned his energies to expanding administrative control throughout the countryside of South Viet-Nam.

The overall situation has been succinctly summarized by John McAlister:

By 1954, after seven years of revolutionary conflict, two competitor governments emerged: The Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam in Hanoi and the Republic of Viet-Nam [sic] in Saigon. Each claimed to be the sole legitimate government for all the Vietnamese people, yet each controlled about half the territory of the country. When these two governments withdrew into separate territories divided at the 17th parallel by the Geneva Conference of 1954 the Western powers expected them to act like separate nation-states, instead of adversaries in a revolutionary war. But neither government did. Nor has either of them denied that 'reunification' is its ultimate goal....

The war now raging in Viet-Nam is a continuation of the pattern of conflict launched during the First Indochina War; it is not a war being fought between two separate nations, but a revolutionary struggle within one nation. More conspicuously than in wars between nations,

⁵⁴ Bernard B. Fall, "The Political-Religious Sects of Vietnam", Pacific Affairs (September 1955), Vol.28, No.3, pp.235-253.

revolutionary war is, in the words of Clausewitz, a 'continuation of politics by other means'. It is a competition between two or more governments, each of which wants to become the sole legitimate government of a people. In wars between nations, political objectives are usually sought by destroying the military power of an adversary, but in revolutionary wars, political goals are sought more directly. The focus of conflict is to eliminate the political structure of an opponent and replace it with a political structure of one's own.⁵⁵

IV. AIM, SCOPE AND METHODS

This thesis is not a history of the Viet-Nam Workers' Party and neither is it an account of the process of revolution underway since 1945. Rather it is a detailed examination of one very important period in the history of the Vietnamese revolution, the six year period from the 1954 Geneva Conference to the formation of the NFL. At the start of this period the leadership of the VWP redefined the objectives of the revolution from defeating French colonialism, to socialist construction in the north and the carrying out of a national democratic revolution in the south. These twin objectives reflected the territorial division of Viet-Nam. Although both aims were interrelated the VWP nevertheless accorded priority to the former. At the end of this period the VWP found it necessary to devote increased resources to the tasks of the national democratic revolution. The Party also found it necessary to shift its tactics, giving increased weight to military force. This change in emphasis occurred simultaneously with renewed emphasis on political struggle. In brief the Resistance model was modified and reapplied to suit the new

⁵⁵ McAlister, The Origins of Revolution, op.cit., p.4.

circumstances. Military force would provide a shield behind which base areas and liberated zones could be built. The embryonic revolutionary society which had survived over the previous six difficult years would be built up and expanded at the expense of the authority and legitimacy of the RVN. From the point of view of the Party, which was not a mass organization, the creation of a new national united front was necessary in order to mobilize the people for the new stage ahead.

The purpose of this thesis is to trace and explain shifts in the VWP's policy on unification and national liberation during the 1954-60 period. Four sets of factors are analyzed: (1) the effects of the international environment on decision-making within the VWP's Central Committee; (2) the interaction between the Central Committee and its subordinate Nam Bo Regional Committee; (3) the effects of policies initiated by the Diem regime on the Party's southern organization and (4) the impact of the pace of northern social, economic and political development. In other words the VWP political system is seen as functioning and interacting simultaneously with both domestic and international systems.⁵⁶

The VWP's policies and reactions to these influences were authoritatively dealt with by regular plenary sessions of the VWP's Central Committee. During the period July, 1954 to September, 1960, (when the VWP convened its 3rd National

⁵⁶ Cf. David Easton, A Framework for Political Analysis (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1965), pp.35-135 for a discussion of political systems and the interaction between a political system and its environment.

Congress) there were thirteen plenums, numbering from six to eighteen, (see Table I-1). Each of these meetings assessed the success and shortcomings in the implementation of policy since the previous session.⁵⁷ This thesis traces domestic and international developments surrounding each plenum in an effort to determine what factors played a significant role in shaping policy outcomes. This framework enables us to place domestic Vietnamese developments into a larger and more comprehensive setting than other studies to date.⁵⁸ What emerges is a picture of the VWP as a complex organization with many parts simultaneously trying to accomplish a list of priorities while at the same time reacting to both domestic and external pressures. Success was never complete and policy had to be modified continually. Errors, mistakes and failures occurred; sometimes these were due to poor implementation, bad organization or low morale. At other times external force intervened to

⁵⁷ Carlyle A. Thayer, "Origin of the National Liberation Front: Debate on Unification Within the Vietnam Workers' Party", Vietnam Report, Part I, (July 15, 1974), Vol.III, No.14, pp.12-15, and Part II (August 1, 1974), Vol.III, No.15, pp.12-15; and Thayer, "Origins of the National Front for the Liberation of South Viet-Nam, 1954-1960: Debate on Unification Within the Viet-Nam Workers' Party", Paper delivered to the Sixteenth Conference of the Australasian Political Studies Association, The University of Queensland (July 20-21, 1974).

⁵⁸ Pike, Viet Cong, op.cit.; and Jeffrey Race, War Comes to Long An: Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972). There are no full length studies which explicitly analyze the decision-making process within the Viet-Nam Workers' Party for the time period under consideration. Despite its title, Race's study casts a far wider net than Long An province. Its interpretations on the origins of the insurgency are both pioneering and brilliant; however the bulk of his work is concerned with the Vietnamese conflict in a later period.

TABLE I-1
 CHRONOLOGY OF PARTY MEETINGS

Chronology of Party Meetings	
1954	
Mid-July	6th Plenum
September	Meeting of Politburo
1955	
March	7th Plenum
August 13-20	8th Plenum
August/September	1st Xu-Uy Nam-Bo Conference
1956	
March/April	Conference of Provincial Representatives, Plain of Reeds
April 19-24	9th Plenum
June	Meeting of Nam-Bo Regional Committee
September	10th Plenum
December	11th Plenum
1957	
Early 1957	2nd Xu-Uy Nam-Bo Conference
March	12th Plenum
Mid-December	13th Plenum
1958	
August	3rd Xu-Uy Nam-Bo Conference
November	14th Plenum
1959	
January	15th Plenum
April	16th Plenum
May	Meeting of Politburo
Mid-October	17th Plenum
October	4th Xu-Uy Nam-Bo Conference
1960	
Late July	18th Plenum
September 5-10	Third National Congress of the Vietnam Workers' Party

SOURCE: Carlyle A. Thayer, "Origin of the National Liberation Front", Vietnam Report (August 1, 1974), Vol.III, No.15, p.15.

frustrate the VWP in the pursuit of its objectives. For example peaceful struggle under the terms of the 1954 Geneva Agreements gave way in late 1955 to attempts to reunify Viet-Nam by political means based on the platform of the Fatherland Front.

In 1956 the shock waves of Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin threatened the unity of the socialist bloc while North Viet-Nam groped with errors committed during the course of land reform, a revolt of the intellectuals and an armed uprising in one of its provinces. Plans for a quick unification of the country were shelved while longer-range strategies were devised. In the south the RVN went from strength to strength seriously challenging the authority of the VWP underground in its base areas. 1957 witnessed the completion of an economic recovery program in the north, the ignition of a low-level rural insurgency in the south, and the beginnings of the Sino-Soviet dispute following the November 1957 Moscow Conference. In 1958 the DRVN embarked on its first three year plan with increased aid from the Soviet Union, Diem continued to receive American assistance while internationally, Chinese foreign policy veered to the left. Finally, by 1959 both the international climate and the situation in the north were considered favourable enough for VWP leaders to consider shifting more attention to the south. There the Party's underground was struggling to survive and was desperate for the go-ahead to resume armed struggle. Permission was granted and after a year of beating back the RVN, conditions were considered right for the establishment of an NFL and an increased effort to topple the Diem

government. It is the complex interplay of these events which will be traced in the following chapters in an effort to reanalyze the origins of the National Front for the Liberation of South Viet-Nam.

CHAPTER 2

THE AFTERMATH OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE : REGROUPMENT (July 1954 - March 1955)

I. THE GENEVA CONFERENCE

The First Indochinese War, fought for nearly eight years between, on the one hand, France and her indigenous allies and, on the other, the resistance movements of Viet-Nam, Laos and Cambodia, was brought to an end as a result of the Geneva Conference in July of 1954. Although much has been written about these agreements, especially their political provisions, one writer has correctly observed:

apart from the decision to implement a cease-fire throughout Indochina, no significant general agreement was reached at Geneva at all. Not only were the published agreements themselves riddled with ambiguity, but they were further undermined by a tissue of secret agreements, private understandings and mental reservations which deprived them of whatever residual clarity they did possess.¹

In retrospect it appears that at least four of the Great Powers (Britain, China, France and the Soviet Union) reached the conclusion that a ceasefire in Indochina would serve their own interests. Britain wished to see a resolution of the conflict lest its continuation spill

¹ Geoffrey Warner, "The 1954 Geneva Agreements: An Ambiguous Legacy", paper delivered to the Seminar Series of the Contemporary China Centre, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University on September 26, 1974; forthcoming in The Australian Journal of Politics and History. Professor Warner's research is particularly valuable in that it incorporates material from "The Pentagon Papers" and interview material with many of the leading French officials.

over and affect her position in Malaya where she was facing a local Communist-led insurgency.² The government of France, facing a population increasingly disenchanted with the "dirty war", was at the end of its electoral tether.³ The Soviet Union and China both shared a common fear that the war in Indochina would escalate, particularly as the United States appeared to be tottering on the brink of intervention. Russia also may have hoped to link a settlement in Indochina with negotiations over Europe, an area of greater strategic concern.⁴ China too had other reasons for wishing to see peace restored. At this time she was turning inward concerned with a new five-year plan of economic construction.⁵ Although the United States was initially opposed to the idea of an international conference to bring about an end to the war in Indochina, indeed her senior officials were talking openly of "united action", nevertheless French and British diplomatic pressures secured American attendance.⁶ In brief, a constellation of powers on the international scene, each for their own particular reasons, were simultaneously moving in a direction favourable for peace in Indochina.

² Anthony Eden, Full Circle (London: Cassell, 1960), p.87.

³ A poll taken on November 21, 1953 indicated that nearly 67% of those who expressed an opinion were in favour of either negotiations or a French withdrawal; Vincent Auriol, Journal de Septennat 1947-1954 (Paris: Armand Colin, 1971), Vol.7, pp.474 and 819 cited in Warner, "The 1954 Geneva Agreements", op.cit., pp.2 and 26.

⁴ New Times [Moscow] (July 31, 1958), p.1 and supplement, p.8.

⁵ Warner, "The 1954 Geneva Agreements", op.cit., pp.11-13 cites a well-publicized speech by Chen Yun on March 5, 1954.

⁶ Dwight D. Eisenhower, The White House Years: Mandate for Change, 1953-1956 (New York: Signet Books, 1965), pp.403-452.

There is sufficient evidence to conclude that Russia and China both brought pressure to bear on the leaders of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam (DRVN) to agree to negotiations with the French.⁷ Undoubtedly the two allies wished to encourage the momentum gained as a result of the armistice in Korea (July 1953). In November 1953, Ho Chi Minh signalled a change in his government's view on the matter. Interviewed in the pages of the Swedish newspaper Expressen he stated:

if the French Government have drawn a lesson from the war they have been waging these last few years and want to negotiate an armistice in Viet Nam and solve the Viet Nam problem by peaceful means, the people and government of the Democratic Republic⁸ of Viet Nam are ready to meet this desire.

In January 1954 a conference of the Big Four foreign ministers (Britain, France, the Soviet Union and the United States) was convened in Berlin. As a result of approaches made by the French Foreign Minister, Georges Bidault, it was agreed to convene a meeting of the "Five Great Powers" (the People's Republic of China being included) and "other states concerned" in Geneva in April (1954) to discuss the problem of restoring peace in Korea and Indochina. The

⁷ Dispatch from Tillman Durdin in Geneva to The New York Times (July 25, 1954), pp.1 and 3 states, for example, "A number of members of the Vietminh delegation have declared openly that pressure from Chinese Communist Premier Chou En-lai and Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav M. Molotov forced their regime to accept less than it rightfully should have obtained here".

⁸ "Replies to a Swedish Correspondent (November 1953)", in Ho Chi Minh, Selected Writings (1920-1969), (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1973), pp.153-154.

Indochina phase of the talks opened on May 8th, with representatives from France, Britain, the Soviet Union, China, the United States, the State of Viet-Nam, the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and the kingdoms of Laos and Cambodia.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss in detail the progress of the conference, as the results are widely known.⁹ Nevertheless it is necessary to highlight certain developments in order to understand why a workable military agreement was reached and a political settlement was not. Firstly, after the initial political broadsides had been exchanged, it was agreed to separate political from military matters and to leave the resolution of the latter to confidential talks between representatives of the French and People's Army of Viet-Nam (PAVN) High Commands.¹⁰ Secondly, the French government of Joseph Laniel fell during the course of the conference. The new Premier, Pierre Mendes-France, set a self-imposed deadline of thirty days for an agreement otherwise at which time he would resign. In such a case

⁹ Victor Bator, Vietnam: A Diplomatic Tragedy (Dobbs Ferry, New York: Oceana Publications, 1965), pp.51-148; Chen, Vietnam and China, op.cit., pp.279-330; Devillers and Lacouture, End of a War, op.cit.; Melvin Gurtov, The First Vietnam Crisis (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), pp.116-130; and Robert F. Randle, Geneva 1954: The Settlement of the Indochinese War (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969). Unfortunately all of these accounts were published before the Pentagon Papers became public. See: "The Geneva Accords 1954", in United States - Vietnam Relations 1945-1967 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), Book 1, Part III, Sections A-D.

¹⁰ Randle, Geneva 1954, op.cit., pp.274-280.

he hinted that he would recommend conscription to the National Assembly.¹¹ Thirdly, representatives of the State of Viet-Nam were effectively frozen out of the secret talks held by the various parties.¹² By the time they learned that partition had been seriously discussed it was too late. When they raised objections and an alternate proposal, they were ignored. Finally, both the Soviet Foreign Minister, Molotov, and his Chinese counterpart, Chou En-lai, intervened decisively at various stages of the conference to keep up the progress. Chou effectively pressured Pham Van Dong, the DRVN Foreign Minister, into dropping his demand that the Khmer and Lao resistance forces be given separate recognition. Molotov selected the two year timetable for holding reunification elections.

There were basically two solutions mooted for a settlement of the conflict. The idea of a coalition government, with Communist representation, was quickly discarded.¹³ Thereafter attention turned to the idea of military regroupment. Here also two major proposals received attention: (1) regroupment into enclaves, the so-called

¹¹ Devillers and Lacouture, End of a War, op.cit., p.246. The Soviet Union undoubtedly wished to see the Mendes-France government remain in office because of its opposition to the proposals for a European Defence Community.

¹² Fishel, "One Vietnam or Two?", op.cit., pp.355-357.

¹³ The DRVN suggested a non-Communist coalition government to the French as early as April 1954; I am indebted to Professor Warner for providing the details from Georges Chaffard's Carnets Secrets de la Decolonisation (Paris: n.p., n.d.) in a personal letter dated November 14, 1974. See also: Randle, Geneva 1954, op.cit., pp.199-200.

"leopard spot" solution and (2) regroupment into zones, in other words partition.¹⁴ Both sides eventually favoured partition. As a result of staff-talks held by Western military officials, it was decided that a demarcation line across central Viet-Nam at roughly 17°30' north would be militarily defensible.¹⁵ The DRVN representatives, on the other hand, were anxious to secure a unified territory,¹⁶ adjacent to China with its own port and capital. It was clear from gestures made by Ta Quang Buu, representative of the PAVN High Command, at a secret military session held on June 10th with M. de Brebisson, his French counter-part, that the DRVN was considering a line drawn at about the sixteenth parallel.¹⁷ The French considered the eighteenth parallel more appropriate. During the course of late June and early July, Pham Van Dong pressed for the thirteenth, fourteenth and sixteenth parallels. Apparently the former claims were attempts to pressure the new Mendes-France government. It was only on July 20th, the deadline set by Mendes-France, that Molotov intervened and picked the 17th parallel - a compromise between the two. At the same time he also dashed DRVN hopes for early elections by suggesting a delay of two years (until July

¹⁴ Randle, Geneva 1954, op.cit., p.203; and Devillers and Lacouture, End of a War, op.cit., pp.207, 224, 250 and 259.

¹⁵ See telegram from the U.S. Department of State, TEDUL 222 (June 18, 1954), to the American Consulate in Geneva in United States-Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 9, p.577; and T.B. Millar, editor, Australian Foreign Minister: The Diaries of R.G. Casey 1951-60 (London: Collins, 1972), p.147.

¹⁶ Devillers and Lacouture, End of a War, op.cit., pp.233-234.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.249-253.

1956). These crucial decisions, made during the final hours, have been dramatically described by two French writers who undoubtedly relied on Mendes-France, who was present, as their source. According to this account:

A visitor entering the great drawing room of the villa a little before five o'clock would have discovered a surprising sight: sitting in chairs casually scattered around the large table, amid a decor better suited to a village wedding, Eden, Mendes-France, Molotov, and Chou [En-lai] surrounded Pham Van Dong. Perspiring, anguished, looking almost hunted, Dong was bending over a map of Indochina - mile by mile, Communist Vietnam was shrinking northward.

Impassively, Molotov waited for the appropriate moment to launch his compromise solution. It was obvious that he had long expected to arbitrate a compromise demarcation line at the 16th Parallel between the Vietminh, who demanded the 13th or 14th, and the French, who held out for the 18th Parallel. He had pointed out repeatedly, as we have seen, that this line was selected, after the Japanese defeat, to divide the British and Chinese spheres in Southeast Asia. (Everything that brought that epoch back to him - the days when the war ended, his country triumphed, Japan was defeated, the days when the fate of the world was settled with a slide rule, and the fair days of San Francisco - all this was to Molotov's taste.) At the beginning of July, however, during a conversation he and Chauvel [the French Ambassador to Switzerland] had arranged between two senior Soviet officers and de Brebisson, the latter had succeeded in convincing the Russians that, among other disadvantages, a demarcation line at the 16th Parallel would deny Laos the use of its vital link with the sea, Colonial Route 9. Molotov had tried to counter this argument by suggesting that special arrangements could be made for the use of the road, but we have already noted how little enthusiasm the French expressed when Pham Van Dong made this suggestion. On July 13, Chou had persuaded Dong to give up the 14th Parallel and settle for the 16th. Molotov felt obliged to support his allies' demand to begin with, but he still wanted to play the part of arbitrator. Chou had made Dong surrender two parallels; Molotov would only ask him for one. Now, on July 20, Molotov let it drop: "Let us agree on the 17th Parallel."

Eden and Mendes-France exchanged a quick look. The 17th Parallel was within 50 miles of the line proposed in the Anglo-American "seven points", which had been accepted as the Western terms for a settlement at the Paris meeting on July 14. The end was in sight. Mendes-France had virtually run out of arguments to counter Molotov's proposal. Dong, now looking as though nothing further could be wrung from him, except his last breath, nevertheless found the strength to demand that, in return for this concession, a date be fixed for the elections. Mendes-France tried to maintain that it would be better not to be specific; but here, as on the demarcation line, he failed to secure all he was bidding for. Dong demanded elections within six months, the latest Soviet memorandum provided for elections with sixteen months, while six weeks earlier, Bidault's experts had wanted to hold them after eighteen months. "Two years?" said Molotov. Mendes-France agreed, and Eden no longer even tried to hide his satisfaction.

It was 5.15 in the afternoon of July 20. The news spread fast - agreement had been reached! Everyone began to prepare for the solemn session in the Palais des Nations at which the armistice texts would be signed and the final declaration on the nine powers adopted.¹⁸

The DRVN acceptance of partition along the 17th parallel, as indeed their decision to negotiate a ceasefire, cannot be entirely explained by pressures from the Soviet Union and China. It will be recalled that on May 7, 1954, on the very eve of the Indochina phase of the Geneva Conference, the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu surrendered after a 55-day siege.¹⁹ It has often been asserted that the 13th parallel represented a more realistic division of Viet-Nam, based on a balance of forces on the

¹⁸ Ibid., pp.292-293.

¹⁹ For accounts of this battle see: Bernard B. Fall, Hell in a Very Small Place (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1966); Vo Nguyen Giap, Dien Bien Phu (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959); and Jules Roy, The Battle of Dien Bien Phu (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

ground, than the 17th parallel. The question why the Communists would make such a generous settlement with the defeated French can be partly answered with reference to external pressures. The complete answer must look at the internal situation.

Most arguments which stress the importance of Sino-Soviet pressure neglect the little publicized view that the PAVN forces may have been exhausted from what must have been a Pyrrhic victory at Dien Bien Phu.²⁰ War-weariness coupled with the possibility of American military intervention²¹ might have influenced DRVN and VWP (Vietnam Workers' Party) officials that continued military struggle was unnecessary to obtain what could easily be gotten at the negotiating table. Although France had

²⁰ According to French estimates (no Vietnamese figures have been released by the DRVN) PAVN losses may have exceeded French casualties (15,000) by 30% - 100%; Pierre Rocolle, Pourquoi Dien Bien Phu? (Paris: Flammarion, 1968), pp.553-557 cited in Warner, "The 1954 Geneva Agreements", op.cit., p.7.

²¹ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0646 GMT, July 19, 1954. Transcripts of monitored radio broadcasts used in this thesis have been obtained from two sources: (1) United States Central Intelligence Agency's Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report and (2) the British Broadcasting Corporation's Summary of World Broadcasts, Parts 3 and 5. Both sources are available at the National Library of Australia in Canberra for the period 1954-1962. In order to avoid excessive footnoting I have omitted reference to all details except those relating to the primary source. Normally a broadcast is printed within two days of transcription. In the case of important broadcasts (or those whose appearance in print follows the original date of broadcast by a considerable amount of time) full details are provided. Generally the U.S. FBIS Daily Reports are more complete and were consulted first. There are differences between the two services with respect to the editing of the daily transcripts for publication. Material selected for inclusion in the Daily Report, for example, may not appear in the Summary of World Broadcasts and vice versa.

suffered a crushing psychological blow and military defeat at Dien Bien Phu she still retained a powerful Expeditionary Corps supplemented by a growing National Army of the State of Viet-Nam.

In 1957 Huynh Van Tieng, a deputy in the DRVN's National Assembly from Saigon-Cholon, admitted in a radio address to compatriots in the south:

Three years have passed since the day we met in Ca Mau [a province in the extreme south of Viet-Nam] to celebrate the reestablishment of peace. You certainly remember that, in the various meetings held before our repatriation, we spiritedly discussed for many days and nights running the prospects for our struggle for national unification. We came to the conclusion that our forces, compared to those of the enemy, were only able for the moment, to wholly liberate a half of our country, that we should continue to struggle, through political means - by utilizing the possibilities of the Geneva Accords - to liberate the other half...²²

According to Janos Radvanyi, a Hungarian diplomat who visited Hanoi in April 1959, Vo Nguyen Giap told him that:

[t]he battle of Dien Bien Phu was essentially the last, desperate exertion of the Vietminh guerrilla army. [Had it not been victorious there] French colonial power in Vietnam would still be having its seat in Hanoi and Saigon. Our armed forces were on the verge of complete exhaustion. Our supply of rice was running out; lack of ammunition was reaching catastrophic proportions. The population had become apathetic during the long partisan war and it was becoming difficult to draft new fighters for our guerrilla army. Because of years of jungle warfare, morale in the fighting units had reached the low point.²³

²² Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 1200 GMT, July 21, 1957.

²³ From an unpublished manuscript cited and quoted in Warner, "The 1954 Geneva Agreements", op.cit., pp.6-7 and 27. No reference appears in Janos Radvanyi's Hungary and the Superpowers: The 1956 Revolution and Realpolitik (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972). Another book may be forthcoming.

A similar view is provided by N.S. Khrushchev in his memoirs:

Before the Geneva Conference there was a preparatory meeting in Moscow. China was represented by Chou En-lai and Vietnam by President Ho Chi Minh and Prime Minister Pham Van Dong. We worked out the position we would take in Geneva, basing it on the situation in Vietnam. The situation was very grave. The resistance movement in Vietnam was on the brink of collapse. The partisans were counting on the Geneva Conference to produce a cease-fire agreement which would enable them to hold on to the conquests which they had won in the struggle of the Vietnamese people against the French occupation. Hanoi was securely in the hands of the French. If you looked at a map on which our own demands for a settlement were marked out, you'd see that North Vietnam was pockmarked with enclaves which had been captured and occupied by the French.²⁴

While the testimony of a Hungarian defector and the veracity of unofficial memoirs might be suspect, authoritative DRVN sources have confirmed that there was a problem with morale at Dien Bien Phu. A commentary on that famous battle published in Hanoi revealed, for example:

This second phase was thus characterized by long and extremely bitter fighting. We had to solve arduous tactical and technical problems, to overcome fatigue and weariness, to meet extremely hard fighting conditions, living week after week in trenches and underground shelters. Sometimes, our positions would be flooded with rain, supplies would be insufficient, and as fighting was carried on uninterruptedly, losses had to be compensated for by reinforcements, and units had to be reorganized.

Under those conditions, political work played an important role in maintaining the morale of the troops, for among certain cadres and

²⁴ Strobe Talbot, editor and translator, Khrushchev Remembers (London: Sphere Books Ltd., 1971), pp.442-443. The authenticity of the memoirs is discussed by Edward Crankshaw in the introduction.

men, negative tendencies had appeared: fear of losses, privations and fatigue; or complacency, underestimation of the enemy and impatience to gain a quick victory.

Before starting the offensive which was to end this second phase, the Central Military Committee, on order from the Political Bureau, launched a campaign for 'moral [sic] mobilization' and 'ideological rectification' among the cadres and Party members.²⁵

Later, an official Party history commented:

However, in 1954, the revolutionary forces were not strong enough to liberate the whole country; the enemy was defeated, but he was not completely subdued. Therefore our country was temporarily divided into two zones.²⁶

It seems reasonable to conclude that war-weariness, exhaustion after Dien Bien Phu, the risks of prolonged fighting, perhaps most importantly the possibility of American military intervention²⁷ and external pressures from Russia and China all played a part in the VWP-DRVN decision to seek a negotiated end to the war. A more difficult question, however, is whether or not the 17th parallel represented an accurate dividing line between the two contending forces. There can be no question that

²⁵ "How the Dien Bien Phu Battle Was Won", Vietnamese Studies [Hanoi] (March 1965), No.8, Contribution to the History of Dien Bien Phu, pp.68-69.

²⁶ An Outline History of the Viet Nam Workers' Party, op.cit. p.79.

²⁷ The United States had downgraded its representation at the Geneva Conference and it was only at the end of the second week in July that the American Secretary of State agreed to let Bedell Smith, an Under Secretary, return to Geneva. The DRVN delegation and indeed its leaders in Viet-Nam could not permit themselves to underestimate American intentions, especially if the talks broke down.

PAVN military and DRVN political strength were greater in the north (Bac Bo) and centre (Trung Bo) than in the south (Nam Bo).

As maps 2-1 and 2-2 indicate any demarcation line drawn north of the 13th parallel across Viet-Nam would cut across areas under the control of the VWP and its subordinate organizations. According to American sources:

During June and July [1954], according to CIA maps, Viet Minh forces held down the larger portion of Annam (excepting the major port cities) and significant pockets in the Cochinchina delta. The consequent claims to all the territory north of a line running northwest from the 13th to the 14th parallel (from Tuy Hoa on the coast through Pleiku to the Cambodian border) was far more in keeping with the actual military situation than the French demand for location of the partition line at the 18th parallel.²⁸

However, as an account published later in Hanoi indicates,²⁹ the 18th parallel marked the divide between the "two parts of Viet Nam":

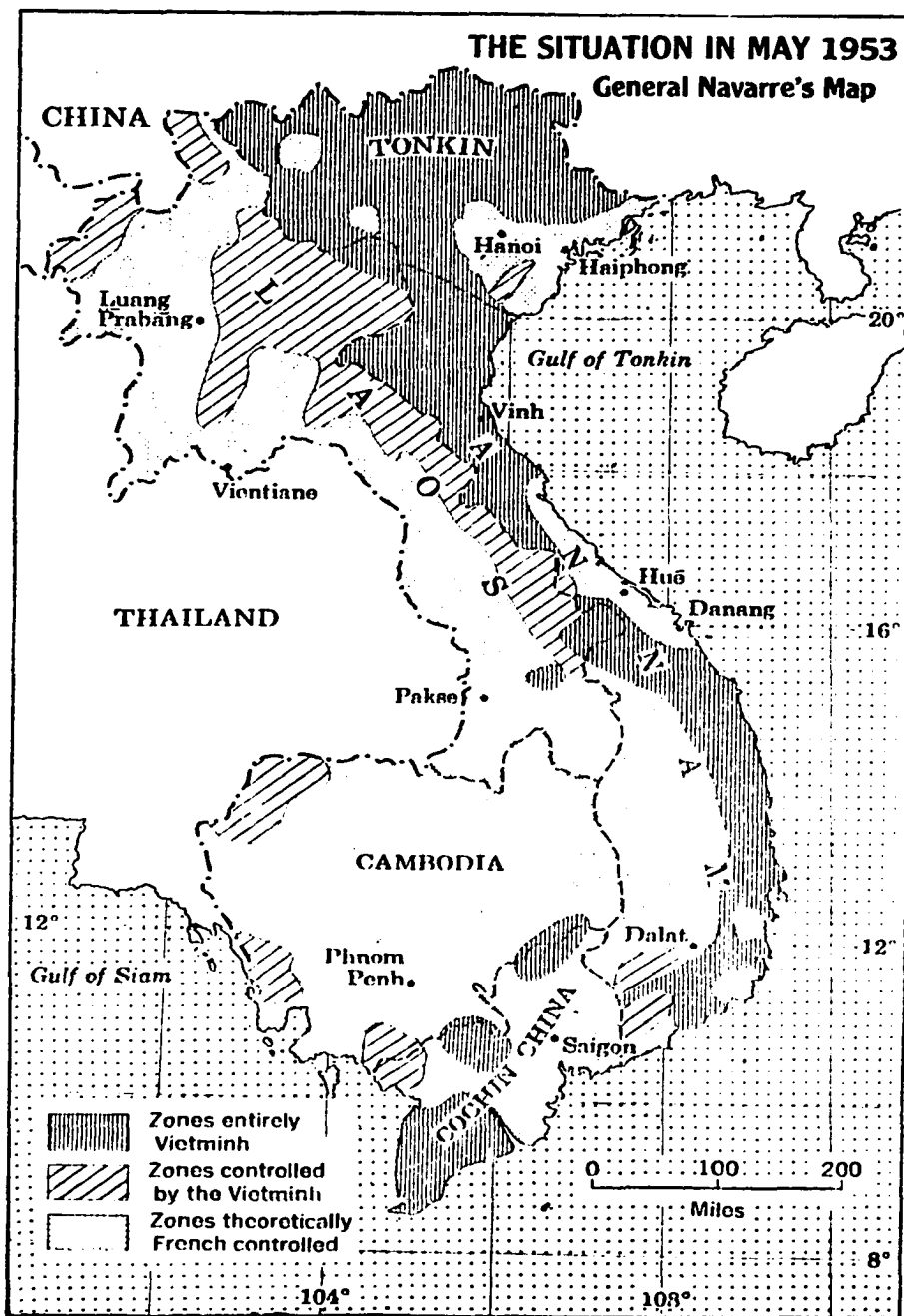
North of the 18th parallel which cut the 4th Interzone into two parts, the French troops only maintained their control over the Red River delta which was considered to correspond roughly to the 3rd Interzone, and in the Tay Bac Interzone (or Northwest), over the system of strong points at Na San and Lai Chau town which they had to evacuate in August and December 1953 respectively. The greater part of Bac Bo

²⁸ "The Outcome for the Communists", in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, III.D.1., pp.D8-D9; see also: U.S. Department of State telegram from Geneva, SECTO 557 (July 3, 1954) to the Secretary of State in Washington, D.C. which contains an appraisal by Chauvel of French strength, in ibid., Book 9, pp.600-602.

²⁹ Ta Xuan Linh, "South Viet Nam at the Time of Dien Bien Phu", Vietnamese Studies, (1976), No.43, Dien Bien Phu: Before, During, After, pp.56-57.

MAP 2-1

THE SITUATION IN MAY 1953



SOURCE: George Kahin and John Lewis, The United States in Vietnam, Revised Edition, p.34.

MAP 2-2

THE SITUATION OF THE BELLIGERENT FORCES
FOLLOWING THE DIEN BIEN PHU BATTLE



SOURCE: Vo Nguyen Giap, *People's War People's Army*, Second Edition (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1974).

remained under the people's power. It formed, with the three northern provinces of the 4th Interzone, an immense free territory encircling the occupied zone.

Contrary to the North, the South, making up about three-fifths of the country's area, presented a carved-up aspect, with occupied and free zones interlacing one another. It was controlled by the colonialists, from north to south, in the following areas:

- the coastal provinces of Central Viet Nam crossed lengthwise by Highway 1, from the 18th parallel to the Thu Bon river, south of Da Nang (16th parallel), Quang Binh, Quang Tri, Thua Thien (with Hue city) and the northern part of Quang Nam;
- Tay Nguyen Highlands with Kontum, Pleiku, Darlac and Lam Dong provinces;
- the southern part of Central Viet Nam from the Deo Ca pass (Cape Varella) to the boundary of Nam Bo (roughly from the 13th to the 11th parallels);
- and the major part of the Mekong plain.

The free zones were composed of:

- the 5th Interzone, Lien khu V in Vietnamese (LK 5 for short): the major part of Quang Nam province; Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh and Phu Yen provinces (Roughly from the 16th to the 13th parallels);
- the 9th Interzone in the Mien Tay Interzone or western Nam Bo, which almost corresponded to what the French called Transbassac: the major part of Bac Lieu and Rach Gia provinces and part of Can Tho province.

The situation in the occupied zones was complicated. It should be noted that right from the beginning of the war many guerilla bases had been set up in the mountain regions of the coastal provinces of Trung Bo and eastern Nam Bo. They formed with the free zones of the 4th and 5th Interzones a single stretch of land. There were also enclaves which served as springboards for the people's armed forces to attack the enemy's rear. Most often they only consisted of five to ten communes such as Phong Dien, north of Hue, Dien Ban, south and southeast of Da Nang, the southwestern part of Phan Thiet ... But they also covered large areas such as the famous D and C war zones and that of the Plain of Reeds in Nam Bo. There were also disputed regions which fell under the control of either side according to the fluctuations of the balance of forces.

As a result of the provisions of the Geneva Accords PAVN military forces located below the 17th parallel were to withdraw into one of four regroupment zones and, over a three-hundred day period, transfer to the north. Regardless of whether or not the 17th parallel was an accurate guide to the balance of forces on the ground, it did serve its purpose as a military demarcation line.

The political provisions of the Geneva Agreements were much more ambiguous. The vital clauses setting forth details on elections, for example, were included in the unsigned Final Declaration. The key provisions were contained in point seven which read:

The Conference declares that, so far as Vietnam is concerned, the settlement of political problems, effected on the basis of respect for the principles of independence, unity, and territorial integrity, shall permit the Vietnamese people to enjoy the fundamental freedoms, guaranteed by democratic institutions established as a result of free general elections by secret ballot. In order to ensure that sufficient progress in the restoration of peace has been made, and that all the necessary conditions obtain for free expression of the national will, general elections shall be held in July 1956 under the supervision of an international commission composed of representatives of the Member States of the International Supervisory Commission, referred to in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities. Consultations will be held on this subject between the competent representative authorities of the two zones from July 20, 1955 onward.³⁰

Both the United States and State of Viet-Nam issued separate statements at that time clearly disassociating themselves from the responsibilities of implementation.³¹

³⁰ Point Seven of the Final Declaration in Great Britain, Further Documents Relating to the Discussions of Indochina at the Geneva Conference, Cmd. 9239, op.cit., p.9-11.

³¹ Randle, Geneva 1954, op.cit., pp.342-346.

Although France signed the ceasefire agreements with the PAVN High Command and agreed to the Final Declaration, she nevertheless issued two public statements which clearly indicated her recognition of the State of Viet-Nam.³² Wesley Fishel has even argued, on the basis of a secret grant of independence to the State of Viet-Nam, prior to the adoption of the Final Declaration, that France had recognized the sovereignty of the State of Viet-Nam over the entire territory of Viet-Nam.³³

There is some evidence that Pham Van Dong and his colleagues did not expect elections to take place. P.J. Honey asserts, for example, that "Pham Van Dong, immediately after signing the Geneva Agreements on Indo-China under Russian pressure, remarked to some non-Communist Vietnamese friends staying at his villa that the national elections envisaged by the agreements would never take place".³⁴ In a subsequent account Honey states:

The worthlessness of this concession [i.e. a definite date for elections] can be seen in a remark made by the Communist North Vietnam (DRV) Prime Minister, Pham Van Dong, to one of my Vietnamese friends immediately after the

³² Great Britain, Further Documents Relating to the Discussions of Indochina at the Geneva Conference, Cmd. 9239, op.cit., p.42.

³³ Fishel, "One Vietnam or Two?", op.cit., p.363, writes: "What is the letter's [from Mendes-France to Tran Van Do] significance? There can be no question but that it is proof of Vietnam's juridical sovereignty. The carefully phrased equation of 'Vietnam' with the 'State of Vietnam' carried the clear implication that Vietnam was one - and it was not the Vietnam of Ho Chi Minh, but the Vietnam of Ngo Dinh Diem!" (emphasis in the original). A copy of the letter in English translation may be found in *ibid.*, pp.361-362.

³⁴ P.J. Honey, "North Vietnam's Party Congress", The China Quarterly (October-December 1960), No.4, p.70.

signing of the agreements. When asked which side he thought would win the elections, Dong replied, "You know as well as I do that there won't be any elections".³⁵

Jeffrey Race cites an interview he conducted with Vo Van An, a high-ranking Party cadre who later defected, to confirm this view: "[a]ccording to An, higher level cadres (province and above) were certain that general elections would never take place, although this was not discussed at lower levels to maintain morale and so as not to conflict with the Party's public stance that the Geneva Accords were a great victory for the Party".³⁶

Robert Turner, a former U.S. government official in Viet-Nam, has written that Race's observation "is supported by the author's [Turner's] interviews with senior defectors..."³⁷

³⁵ P.J. Honey, Communism in North Vietnam: Its Role in the Sino-Soviet Dispute (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1966), p.6.

³⁶ Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., p.34.

³⁷ Robert F. Turner, Vietnamese Communism: Its Origins and Development (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1975), p.107; Turner's interviews were conducted between 1968-1971. My own experience with defectors from the ranks of the Communist underground in South Viet-Nam is less categorical. Most expressed the opinion that even in the face of indications that elections were unlikely they nevertheless worked in the political struggle movement to bring them about. A most important consideration is the time period in question. After July 1955 when the deadline for consultations passed and nothing happened most cadres concluded that elections would not be held. I have been unable to confirm on the basis of interviews with "stay-behinds" (those who did not regroup) and "regroupees" (those who went north) that the Party officially acknowledged prior to July 1956 that elections would not be held. Interviews with Phan The Ngoc, a stay-behind cadre who was active in Cambodian press circles in 1954-55 and who later became a member of the My Tho province committee specializing in "arts and letters" (uy vien van nghe), Saigon, Ministry of Open Arms, June 8, 1972; and Bui Cong Tuong, a member

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According to Seymour Topping, a correspondent working for Associated Press in Geneva at that time:

The Vietminh [DRVN] no doubt had every reason to believe, as did Chou En-lai and Molotov, that all of Vietnam would fall to them within two years. In this sense, the Vietminh leadership was satisfied, although members of their delegation complained privately to me that they had been cheated and expressed doubt that the national elections would be held in 1956.³⁸

In light of Topping's remarks, and the vociferous campaign subsequently waged by the DRVN authorities to hold elections,³⁹ it seems reasonable to conclude that the DRVN, despite whatever misgivings it might have expressed in private and to its own cadres, favoured elections as the means of unifying Viet-Nam. Pham Van Dong and other members of his delegation were undoubtedly gravely upset that elections had been scheduled for two

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of the Long-Chau-Ha (a combination of the first names of three delta provinces: Long Xuyen, Chau Doc, Ha Tien) province during 1946-54. Tuong became a member of the Ben Tre province committee in 1954 specializing in propaganda and training, Saigon, Ministry of Open Arms, June 9, 1972. Tuong was also one of Turner's informants; Xuan Vu, member of the Ben Tre province committee until 1954 when he regrouped to the north, Saigon, Ministry of Open Arms, July 12, 1972.

³⁸ Seymour Topping, Journey Between Two Chinas (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p.151.

³⁹ Cf. Franklin B. Weinstein, Vietnam's Unheld Elections: The Failure to Carry Out the 1956 Reunification Elections and the Effect on Hanoi's Present Outlook (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Department of Asian Studies, Cornell University: July 1966), Data Paper No.60.

years instead of within six months, a time scale they had favoured.⁴⁰ At that time DRVN officials still held out hope that France would honour its commitments.

The overall view of the situation was summarized by a directive allegedly issued by the Central Committee of the VWP which the French acquired in November 1954:

peace is concluded to procure advantages for us, not for the purpose of ceasing the struggle. Peace as such is not unconditional. We love peace and do not want war which causes bloodshed, but we are resolved to maintain our fundamental point of view which is independence, unity, democracy and peace. If the political struggle does not permit us to accomplish this essential aim, we are resolved to continue the war in order to support our just cause and to achieve total victory.⁴¹

⁴⁰ On June 10, 1954 Pham Van Dong answered accusations from representatives of the State of Viet-Nam that his proposals of May 25th would leave Viet-Nam divided by underlining that national unity would be restored by elections which would be held within 6 months; Warner, "The 1954 Geneva Agreements", op.cit., p.16; Devillers and Lacouture, End of a War, op.cit., p.250.

⁴¹ "Viet Minh policy document on Post-Geneva strategy, probably issued by the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party to the Eastern Interzone of Nambo, obtained in November, 1954", in United States Department of State, Working Paper on the North Vietnamese Role in the War in South Viet-Nam (Washington, D.C., 1968), Appendices, Item 200, p.7. The text of the Working Paper has been reproduced in Congressional Record, 90th Congress, 2nd Session (May 9, 1968), Vol.114, No.79, pp.3604-3610 and in Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes [Saigon] (June 1968), Document Nos.36-37. According to Jeffrey Race, "The Origins of the Second Indochina War", Asian Survey (May 1970), Vol.X, No.5, p.361, footnote 3, only 250 copies of the appendices were produced. The author consulted a collection on deposit at the Widner Library, Harvard University.

The use of captured materials inevitably raises the question of forged or faked documents. Because the appendices are used as a major source of documentation for this thesis it is necessary to explain why I believe the collection is genuine. Firstly, the 1968 Working Paper originated as an inter-agency study within the U.S. government. In its initial stages it was not intended for publication;

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indeed much of its materials were highly classified consisting of radio intercepts, agent reports and such like. When the decision was taken to make the report public via the State Department various officials who were assigned to the project were requested to go over the massive amount of documentation and select out for publication items of undoubted authenticity. In the process some materials had to be extracted, summarized or shortened to protect the original sources. Secondly, much of the documentation was also used in the preparation of "The Pentagon Papers". The unauthorized leak of the latter in 1971 permits cross-checking. None of the material which overlaps appears to have been tailored for the 1968 Working Paper whose publication was authorized. Finally, other scholars have used this source without complaint that the materials are faked. Although this does not demonstrate the authenticity of each and every item it does establish their general acceptance among scholars who are closely involved with scrutinizing such materials. See: Gareth Porter, A Peace Denied: The United States, Vietnam, and the Paris Agreement (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), pp.1-16 and 279, footnote 15 (which is the document cited above); Brian C. Shaw, "Some Comments on North Vietnam's Involvement in South Vietnam", paper delivered to a Work-in-Progress Seminar, Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University (May 7, 1969); and Race, War Comes to Long, op.cit., pp.1-140, passim.

Obviously each and every document must be taken on its own merits. Wherever possible additional sources have been cited when the point in questions seems controversial or in need of documentation. The item in question is probably authentic for the following reasons. Firstly, Professor Geoffrey Warner, quite coincidentally, managed to read a copy of the French language original (itself a translation from the Vietnamese) in the possession of General Michel de Brebisson in Paris on March 5, 1973. This seems to indicate that the dating of the document and source (via French intelligence) are correct; rather, the document was not fabricated by the United States in 1968. Secondly, internal references in the document to the 6th plenum of the Viet-Nam Workers' Party, in particular a quotation from Ho Chi Minh's speech, preceded the publication of the speech by Hanoi in 1962. Interestingly Jean Lacouture quotes extensively from this speech in his biography of Ho Chi Minh, giving as his source: "The Selected Works of Ho Chi Minh (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962), pp.458-62." No such speech appears in the English-language edition and I can only assume that the translator of Lacouture's book (written in French) rendered the title of the French edition of Ho's Selected Works into English. The French edition of Ho's writings are not available to the author. See: Jean Lacouture, Ho Chi Minh: A Political Biography, translated from the French by Peter Wiles and edited by Jane Clark Seitz (New York: Vintage Books, 1968),

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II. THE SIXTH PLENUM (JULY 1954)

The decision by VWP leaders in 1953 to seek a negotiated end to the war was not without controversy. General Vo Nguyen Giap, PAVN Commander-in-Chief, apparently argued heatedly for pushing the seige at Dien Bien Phu to a successful conclusion as a prerequisite for any political bargaining.⁴² Pham Ngoc Thao, at that time a Colonel in the People's Army, reported that a majority of his colleagues, mainly staff officers,

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p.195; Geoffrey Warner, "Interview with General Michel de Brebisson, Paris, 5 March 1973", typescript of interview notes, pp.1-2. Interview with William S. Stearman, Washington, D.C., Executive Office Building, August 25, 1972. Mr Stearman, then a member of the National Security Council, was involved in preparing the 1968 Working Paper for publication.

According to Pentagon analyst General Paul F. Gorman, "In early 1967, at the request of the Secretary of Defense, an interagency study group was convened from CIA, DIA [Defense Intelligence Agency], and the Department of State for a comprehensive review of U.S. intelligence concerning: 'The North Vietnamese Role in the Origin, Direction, and Support of the War in South Vietnam'". According to a footnote "(t)his study was designed to answer queries from Congressman Evans ... and was considered for publication, modified as a 'White Paper'". Congressman Evans was responsible for inserting the document in the above-cited Congressional Record. The unclassified version was tabled by W. Averell Harriman, Chief U.S. Delegate, at a session of the Paris Peace Talks on May 27, 1968. The original study was labelled as follows: United States Interagency Intelligence Committee, "The North Vietnamese Role in the Origin, Direction and Support of the War in South Vietnam", (DIA AP-4) (May 1967 - SECRET), 2 Vols. See: "Hanoi and the Insurgency in South Vietnam", in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab. 3, p.34; and "Failure of the Geneva Settlement", in ibid., Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab. 1, unpublished footnotes, note 8.

Cited hereafter as: Working Paper.

⁴² Chen, Vietnam and China, op.cit., pp.294-295.

refused to accept the rumours of an impending settlement at Geneva until addressed by Ho Chi Minh himself at a specially convened meeting held in June 1954.⁴³

Nevertheless the VWP met in mid-July at the sixth plenary session of the Central Committee⁴⁴ to review progress at Geneva and to approve the outline of the settlement whose basic provisions (partition and elections) had already emerged. There is every likelihood that the self-imposed deadline set for July 20th by Premier Mendes-France weighed heavily on the deliberations. A failure to secure an agreement at this time may very well have meant a resumption of the fighting with the possibility of American military intervention.

The tenor of Ho Chi Minh's speech to this Party gathering suggests that disagreement was rife. Some, no doubt recalling the unsatisfactory agreements negotiated with the French in 1946, wanted to continue the fight. Others, reflecting on the destruction and war-weariness of the population, appeared eager to make concessions in order to secure peace. Ho's remarks touched on both points of view, but his extended comments on "leftist deviation" appeared a signal that the hawks were the more powerful group.

⁴³ Charles B. McLane, "The Russians and Vietnam: Strategies of Indirection", International Journal (Winter 1968/69), Vol. XXIV, No. 1, p. 49, footnote 3.

⁴⁴ Only brief accounts of this meeting have appeared before: An Outline History of the Viet Nam Workers' Party, op.cit., p. 76; Lacouture, Ho Chi Minh, op.cit., pp. 193-195; Bernard B. Fall, "A 'Straight Zigzag': The Road to Socialism in North Viet-Nam", in A. Doak Barnett, editor, Communist Strategies in Asia: A Comparative Analysis of Governments and Parties (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), p. 207; and "Thirty-five Years of Revolutionary Struggle by Our Party", Working Paper, Appendices, Item 209, p. 16.

Ho divided his address into three sections.⁴⁵

In part one he argued: given the aggressive nature of American imperialism the very convening of the Berlin and Geneva conferences "is in itself a victory for our side and a defeat for the imperialists". He attributed this success to the divided nature of the capitalist camp caused by contradictions between the U.S. on the one hand, and France and Britain on the other. In brief, the United States was opposed to peace in Viet-Nam and was doing everything in its power to sabotage the Geneva Conference even to the extent of proposing "joint action" in Indochina. It had become, in Ho's words, "the main enemy of world peace".

Turning to the domestic front Ho made a cautious analysis of the progress achieved to date. Among the positive aspects were the unity of the Khmer, Lao and Vietnamese resistance movements, major military victories including Dien Bien Phu and initial success in combating feudalism through mobilization for land reform. Despite these accomplishments, however, Ho warned:

Thus, since the start of the resistance, our posture has grown stronger and the enemy's weaker. But we should bear in mind that this should be understood in a relative, not absolute sense. We must guard against

⁴⁵ I have used two versions of this speech, one in Vietnamese and the other in English; see: Ho Chi Minh, Nhung Chang Duong Lich Su Ve Vang [Episodes from a Glorious History] (Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban Quan Doi Nhan Dan, 1973), pp.77-90; and "Report to the 6th Plenum of the Viet Nam Workers' Party Central Committee (July 15, 1954)", in Ho Chi Minh, Selected Writings, op.cit., pp.172-183.

subjectiveness and not underrate our enemy. Our successes have awakened the American imperialists. After the Dien Bien Phu campaign, the latter's intentions and plan for intervention have also undergone changes aimed at protracting and internationalizing the Indochina war, sabotaging the Geneva Conference, and ousting the French by every means, in order to occupy Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos

Therefore, the US imperialists not only are the enemy of the world's people, but are becoming the main and direct enemy of the Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laos peoples.
(emphasis in original)

In part two, entitled "New Tasks", Ho argued that the new situation required a change in objectives. The old slogan, "Resistance to the end" must be replaced by a new one: "Peace, Unity, Independence, Democracy". American imperialism had replaced French colonialism as the main enemy of the revolution. Therefore, according to Ho:

Our policy must change in consequence: formerly we confiscated the French imperialists' properties; now, as negotiations are going on, we may, in accordance with the principle of equality and mutual benefit, allow French economic and cultural interests to be preserved in Indochina. Negotiations entail reasonable mutual concessions. Formerly we said we would drive out and wipe out all French aggressive forces; now, in the talks held, we have demanded and the French have accepted, that a date be set for the withdrawal of their troops. In the past, our aim was to wipe out the puppet administration and army with a view to national reunification; now we practise a policy of leniency and seek reunification of the country through nation-wide elections.

Ho's mention of elections was made five days before Molotov settled the issue by choosing a two-year time frame. Neither, or so it seems, was Ho aware that the 17th parallel would be picked as the military demarcation

line. Nevertheless, as the following quotation reveals, Ho and the VWP were already committed to partition. In Ho's words:

If you want peace you must end the war; if you want to end the war then you must obtain a cease-fire. If you want a cease-fire then you must readjust [dieu chinh] zones, which is to say, the enemy's army must concentrate in one area, so as to be able to withdraw gradually [from the country], while our army concentrates in another area. We must obtain a very large territory where we would have sufficient means for building, consolidating, and developing our forces for the purpose of influencing other regions, and thereby bring about reunification [of the country]. Readjustment of zones is not partition; it is a temporary affair leading to reunification.⁴⁶

Ho then went on to talk about the various problems that would arise (especially among people in the south where the French would take responsibility) as a result of partition. He also expounded on the need to create new policies, especially in the north, where the Party would be given control of cities. Ho concluded this part by warning those present against the following ideological errors:⁴⁷

Leftist deviation. Some people, intoxicated with our repeated victories, want to fight on at all costs, to a finish; they see only the trees, not the whole forest; with their attention focused on the withdrawal of the French they fail to detect their schemes, they see the French but not the

⁴⁶ This is my translation from the Vietnamese.

⁴⁷ Lacouture, Ho Chi Minh, op.cit., p.195, observes: "The amount of attention which he devotes to 'leftism' and 'rightism', respectively, testifies to the nature of his own position and of the opponents whom he had to convince".

Americans; they are partial to military action and make light of diplomacy. They are unaware that we are struggling in international conferences as well as on the battlefields in order to attain our goal. They will oppose the new slogans, which they deem to be rightist manifestations and to imply too many concessions. They set forth excessive conditions unacceptable to the enemy. They want quick results, unaware that the struggle for peace is a hard and complex one. Leftist deviation will cause one to be isolated, alienated from one's own people and those of the world, and suffer setbacks.

Rightist deviation will lead to pessimism, inaction and unprincipled concessions. It causes one to lack confidence in the people's strength and to blunt their combative spirit, to lose the power to endure hardships and to aspire only to a quiet and easy life.

Leftist and rightist tendencies are both wrong. They will be exploited by the enemy; they will benefit them and harm us.

Part three of Ho's speech was brief and to the point. He listed three responsibilities and ten tasks which were to be carried out in the immediate future "under the leadership of the Central Committee". The three "responsibilities" were:

1. To secure and consolidate peace; to achieve unity, independence, and democracy for the whole country.
2. To strengthen the people's armed forces and build up a mighty people's army capable of meeting the requirements of the new situation.
3. To keep implementing the slogan: land to the tiller. To strive to restore production and to prepare for national reconstruction.

Ho listed the following ten tasks ("Each locality and each branch will not necessarily have to carry out all ten but each will be assigned a certain number of tasks".):

1. To create unity of mind in the whole Party and among the entire people as regards the new situation and the new tasks.
2. To strengthen leadership in diplomatic struggle.
3. To strengthen the people's army.
4. To take over the newly-liberated zones; especial attention to be paid to the taking over and management of the cities.
5. To give a new orientation to work in the zone temporarily reserved for regrouped enemy forces.
6. To keep consolidating the former free zones.
7. To mobilize the masses vigorously for land reform.
8. To improve economic and financial work and prepare conditions for the reconstruction of the country.
9. To assist the Pathet Lao and Khmer forces.
10. To continue the work of reorganization and ideological rectification of the Party in the newly-liberated areas.

It is possible that the Central Committee also heard a report by Ho on his talks with Chou En-lai held during July 3-5, 1954. Chou undoubtedly appraised Ho of the talks he had held in Berne with Mendes-France on June 23rd as well as his conversations with Nehru in India and U Nu in Burma held enroute to the Sino-Vietnamese border. Chou and Mendes-France reached agreement on certain issues relating to Laos and Cambodia; on Viet-Nam they both agreed that military issues should have priority over political ones. Both men raised the issue of regroupment zones. Mendes-France suggested the possibility

of a "horizontal" cut while Chou recommended bilateral talks between the DRVN delegation and France on the issue.⁴⁸

Chou's trip to India was his first to a non-Communist Asian country. While in Delhi he promised Nehru that he would persuade the DRVN to withdraw its forces from Cambodia and Laos and grant recognition to both kingdoms. In their final communique both leaders agreed to conduct their future relations on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence and expressed the hope that these principles would be applied "to the solution of the problems in Indochina".⁴⁹ According to one writer, "(t)he importance of this historic meeting cannot be exaggerated. It helped Chou later to persuade Ho Chi Minh to withdraw from Laos and Cambodia by pointing out that Indian and Asian opinion would be adverse toward the Vietminh's [DRVN's] aggressive moves and continuation of the conflict".⁵⁰ Later Chou would nominate India as chairman of the tripartite International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICSC), a body set up to oversee the implementation of the Geneva Agreements in Indochina. Chou's visit to Burma had more to do with bilateral relations between the two countries than with the settlement at Geneva. Nevertheless the principles expressed in the Sino-Burmese joint communique had relevance to Viet-Nam.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Devillers and Lacouture, End of a War, op.cit., p.255.

⁴⁹ D.R. SarDesai, Indian Foreign Policy in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, 1947-1964 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p.48.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Russell H. Fifield, The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia: 1945-1958 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), pp.198-199.

A marked change in the DRVN's views on where to draw the demarcation line was evident after the Chou-Ho talks. According to an American account these changes resulted from Chinese pressure:

This Viet Minh [DRVN] position [on demarcation] underwent a drastic change by the middle of July; and the change can be traced to a meeting between Chou En-lai and Ho Chi Minh at Nanning near the China-Vietnam border. According to CIA reports, Chou applied pressure on Ho to accept a partition line much farther to the North, probably the 17th or 18th parallel. Pham Van Dong's subsequent compromise position indicating a willingness of the Viet Minh to discuss partition at the 16th parallel seems to have originated in the talks between Chou and Ho.⁵²

Ten days separated the end of the Chou-Ho talks and Ho's speech before the 6th plenum of the Central Committee. The VWP Politburo met immediately after the talks.⁵³ It probably discussed the various implications of the cross-cutting pressures being brought to bear and reviewed the situation on the ground before agreeing to accept partition at or near the 17th parallel. Ho's speech to the 6th plenum clearly indicates that "some comrades" had misgivings. These were obviously overcome. According to a later Party account of this meeting:⁵⁴

⁵² "Sino-Soviet Objectives and Strategy", in United States - Vietnam Relations, Book I, III.C.2., p.C-23. The CIA source is cited as follows: CIA Memorandum, "Asian Communist Employment of Negotiations as a Political Tactic", RSS No. 0017/66 (SECRET/No Foreign Distribution/Controlled Distribution), no date; Devillers and Lacouture, End of a War, op.cit., pp.257-258.

⁵³ Ban Nghien Cuu Lich Su Dang Trung Uong [Department of Historical Research Party Central (Committee)], Bon Muoi Lam Nam Hoat Dong Cua Dang Lao Dong Viet-Nam [45 Years Of Activities of the Viet-Nam Workers' Party] (Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban Su That, 1976), p.74.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

The [sixth] session unanimously agreed with the Politburo on the decision to negotiate in order to reestablish peace in Indochina on the basis of French recognition of the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Viet-Nam. The Conference decided 'to direct the struggle against the U.S. imperialists and the French warmongers and, relying on the success already achieved, to struggle to realize peace in Indochina, to smash the schemes of the U.S. imperialists to prolong and expand the Indochinese War, to consolidate peace, realize unity and independence, and to achieve democracy throughout the country'.

Additional details on the resolution of the sixth plenum are provided by an East German⁵⁵ who was told by the VWP Secretary-General Truong Chinh, that the Central Committee resolved the following:

1. To observe strictly the cease-fire agreement and to strengthen peace;
2. To enlarge the national and democratic Front and to prepare for general elections with the aim of achieving the unity of the country and to bring about complete independence and democracy;
3. To strengthen the national defence and the forces for the protection of peace;
4. To materialize further the slogan "Land to the Tiller", to liberate the productive forces of the village, to build up the national economy, to realise the plans for national construction and to improve gradually the economic and cultural living conditions of the people.

III. THE AFTERMATH OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE

In the post-Geneva period most Western observers believed that the Lao Dong party was so strong politically

⁵⁵ Franz Faber, Rot Leuchtet der Song Cai (Berlin: Kongress Verlag, 1955), p.135.

that it would dominate the scheduled electoral contest.⁵⁶ Party officials were certainly aware of their assets in the south. French and American intelligence sources estimated their control to range between sixty and ninety percent of the population in areas outside of sect control. This would mean a rural strength of approximately 2.1 to 3.6 million persons out of a total population of some ten million living below the seventeenth parallel at that time.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ United States Central Intelligence Agency, Post-Geneva Outlook in Indo-China, National Intelligence Estimate (August 3, 1954), NIE 63-5054 in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 10, p.692, "If the scheduled elections are held in July, 1956, and if the Viet Minh does not prejudice its political prospects, the Viet Minh will almost certainly win".

⁵⁷ United States Department of State, The Communist Subversive Threat in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos (Washington, D.C.: Office of Intelligence Research, December 29, 1955), pp.8-10 cited in "Rebellion Against My-Diem", in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5.Tab 2, p.10; Joseph Alsop, writing in The New York Herald Tribune (March 1, 1955) is quoted as saying, "Estimates of the dimensions of the problem vary rather widely, to be sure. If you ask the Americans here [in Saigon] they will tell you that outside the feudal domains of the military religious sects, anywhere from 50 to 70 per cent of the southern Indochinese are subject to Viet Minh influence or control. French experts give still higher percentages, between 60 and 90". Cited in Hammer, The Struggle for Indochina, op.cit., p.360. According to census figures the population south of the seventeenth parallel was about 10 million; this would have placed the population in the liberated areas at between 2.1 and 3.6 million; Viet Nam Cong Hoa [Republic of Viet-Nam], Bo Kinh Te Quoc Gia [Ministry of National Economy], Viet Nam Nien Giam Tong Ke [Annual Statistical Yearbook] (Saigon: 1956), Vol.4 (1952-53) and 6 (1956). The total population figures had to be extrapolated from missing data (population of some provinces was available for 1943 only). Joseph Alsop, "A Reporter At Large", op.cit., p.35, provided an estimate of 2 million; Pham Van Dong, in an interview with Wilfred Burchett, stated that the figure was 3 million of whom 2 million had been under the DRVN government since the August Revolution of 1945, Wilfred Burchett dispatch from Geneva in The Daily Worker (July 26, 1954), p.4. This figure reappears in Wilfred Burchett, North of the 17th

cont'd

The political situation in areas outside Party control were favourable. Here the Party's analysis emphasized the feudal nature of the sects, the monarchical nature of the State of Viet-Nam and the contradictions between French and American interests.⁵⁸ In short, the Party perceived advantages in a divided opposition which they felt they could take advantage of in the period ahead.

It took the VWP nearly two months to work out the details of its program for the south. This delay may have been due to three factors: (1) dissension in the Party over both the principles of the peace settlement and the fine details eventually agreed to (2) a deep suspicion over American intentions immediately after the Geneva Conference and (3) problems in communicating and coordinating action with the leaders in Nam Bo. It was not until the third week of September that the Politburo assembled and approved the basic resolutions which would guide policy in the year ahead.⁵⁹

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Parallel (Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1956), p.213; it is quoted approvingly in B.S.N. Murti, Vietnam Divided: The Unfinished Struggle (Bombay, Calcutta and New Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1956), p.26.

58 Working Paper, Appendices, Item 200, pp.1-6.

59

Xu Uy Nam Bo [Nam Bo Regional Committee], Tinh Hinh Nam Bo Tu Sau Hoa Binh Lap Lai Den Hien Nay [The Situation in Nam Bo from the Restoration of Peace to the Present] (typescript, circa 1959/60). This is a high-level policy review-cum-history written by the Nam Bo Regional Committee on the eve of a shift from political to military struggle. A copy of the Vietnamese original was obtained by the author while on field work in Viet-Nam in the summer of 1972. I would like to thank Mr William E. Gausmann, then

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In the meantime on July 25th, the Central Committee held another meeting. Despite whatever reservations certain individuals might have felt, the public announcements presented a united front. An editorial in the Party's newspaper, Nhan Dan, declared that the Geneva Conference constituted a "brilliant success".⁶⁰ A Joint Enlarged Session of the Lien Viet Front and the Viet-Nam Peace Committee was convened to give its full support and approval for the agreements.⁶¹ A Plenary Session of the National Assembly's Standing Committee did likewise.⁶²

The immediate policy tasks in the new period were listed in both the Nhan Dan editorial and in an Appeal by the Party on the same date. The editorial stated that the main task of the revolutionary movement was

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editor of Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes, for bringing this document to my attention. I would also like to thank Mr Douglas Pike for extracting a copy of the Vietnamese original from the Republic of Viet-Nam authorities. The document was initially obtained by the 5th U.S. Special Forces on April 28, 1969 in unexplained circumstances. An English translation was published in United States Department of Defense Intelligence Information Report (March 11, 1970), Report No. 6-028-0130-70, CDEC [Combined Documentation Exploitation Center] Document Log Number 01053370. Copies of this translation are available from two sources: Jeffrey Race, compiler, Vietnamese Materials (Chicago: Center for Research Libraries), microfilm reel III, document number 1083; and "Turner Document No.3", Hoover Institution, Stanford, California, Robert Turner, a former assistant to William Gausmann, deposited this and several other items with the Hoover Institution archives. Cited hereafter as Tinh Hinh Nam Bo.

⁶⁰ "We Enthusiastically Welcome the Restoration of Peace in Indochina", Nhan Dan (July 25, 1954) as broadcast by Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0619 and 1200 GMT, July 25, 1954.

⁶¹ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1200 GMT, July 30, 1954.

⁶² Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Indochina and Southeast Asia, 0430 GMT, July 29, 1954.

struggle to consolidate the peace we have won, faithfully and rapidly implement the provisions of the armistice agreement, and go forward to the settlement of the Indochinese political issues, so as to fully regain our national rights, that is - complete unity, independence, and democracy.⁶³

The Appeal declared:

The patriotic struggle of our people has entered a new phase. The phase of armed struggle is now being replaced by the phase of political struggle. However, like the armed fighting, the political struggle will certainly be long and hard before reaching complete victory.⁶⁴

Neither the Appeal nor the editorial was specific about policy in the south other than its emphasis on implementing provisions of the ceasefire agreements. For example, the same Nhan Dan editorial spelled out the tasks for the new phase of political struggle in this way:

we must continue to fulfill the present pressing tasks in order to consolidate and develop our people's democratic regime. These tasks are: consolidate the forces of peace of our people, carry out the peasant mass mobilization, carry through reduction of land rent and the agrarian reform, increase production to restore and develop the economy in the countryside as well as in the urban areas.⁶⁵

During the course of the First Indochina War coordination of Lao Dong Party policy throughout the length of Viet-Nam was usually difficult. In part this

⁶³ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0619 and 1200 GMT, July 25, 1954.

⁶⁴ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1200 GMT, August 5, 1954; 0515 GMT, August 6, 1954.

⁶⁵ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0619 and 1200 GMT, July 25, 1954.

reflected regional differences in the country as well as the geographical configuration of Viet-Nam. In 1951 an attempt was made to remedy this situation by creating a special Central Committee Directorate for Southern Viet-Nam (Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam).⁶⁶ This Directorate was staffed by members of the Lao Dong Party's Central Committee and served as its forward echelon. Its precise location, if there was one, was guessed to be somewhere in the U-Minh forest area of the Ca-Mau peninsula.⁶⁷

It was this Directorate which implemented Party policy in the south after the Geneva Agreements were signed. It was charged with implementing a ceasefire in central Viet-Nam on August 1st and in southern Viet-Nam on August 11th.⁶⁸ In each region regroupment of military forces was to take place within fifteen days of the ceasefire into certain specified provisional assembly areas. These were: (1) Binh-Dinh and Quang-Ngai provinces, (2) Ham-Tan - Xuyen-Moc, (3) the Plain of Reeds and (4) in Ca Mau province (see map 2-3).

After this initial regroupment a final regroupment of PAVN forces north of the seventeenth parallel was to occur

⁶⁶ Albert E. Palmerlee, "The Central Office for South Viet-Nam", Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes (August 1968), Document No.40, Appendix A, pp.19-20, which contains an English translation of a French translation of the Vietnamese original document issued by the Lao Dong Party establishing the Directorate for the South (Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam); see also Robert J. O'Neill, General Giap: Politician and Strategist (Melbourne: Cassell Australia, 1969), p.103.

⁶⁷ Palmerlee, "The Central Office for South Viet-Nam", op.cit., p.4; Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., pp.28-29.

⁶⁸ Article 10 of the "Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet-Nam", in Great Britain, Further Documents Relating to the Discussion of Indochina at the Geneva Conference, Cmd. 9239, op.cit., pp.27-38.

within three hundred days following the schedule listed in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1 . Final Military Regroupment Timetable

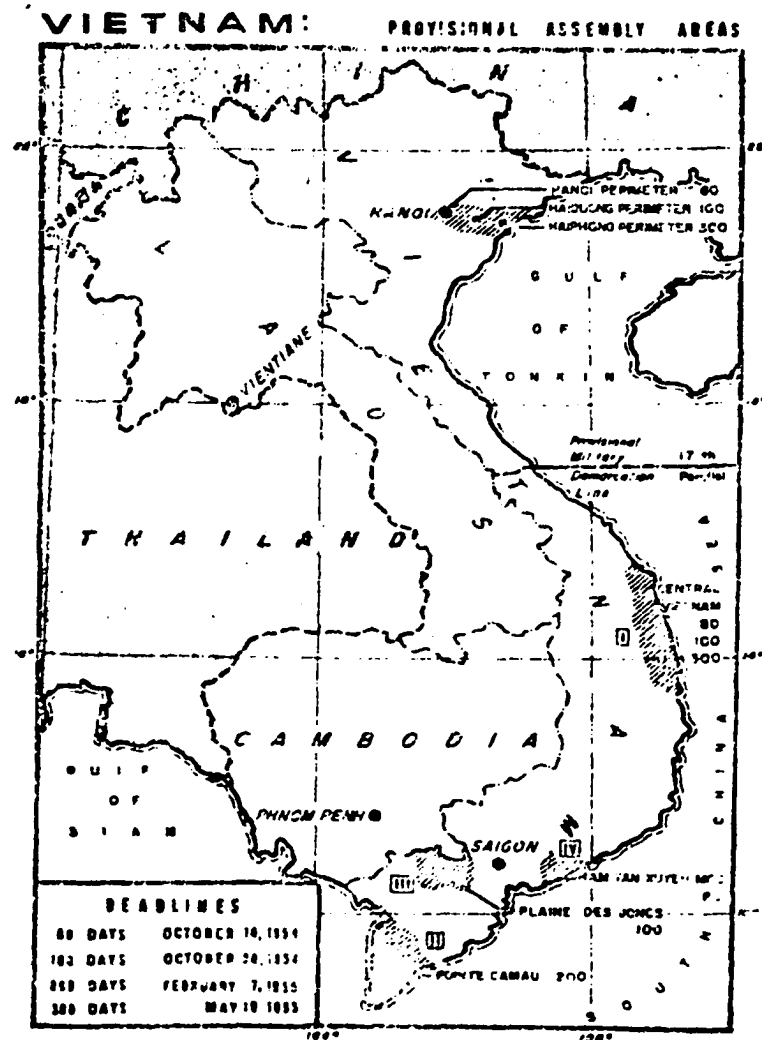
- 1) Within 80 days (10 October 1954)
 - Ham-Tan - Xuyen Moc
 - Binh-Dinh - Quang-Ngai (first instalment)
 - 2) Within 100 days (30 October 1954)
 - Plain of Reeds
 - Binh-Dinh - Quang-Ngai (second instalment)
 - 3) Within 200 days (7 February 1955)
 - Ca-Mau
 - 4) Within 300 days (19 May 1955)
 - Binh-Dinh - Quang-Ngai (third and final instalment)
-

A similar procedure was to be followed by the French Union Forces which would result in their regroupment south of the seventeenth parallel. A special demilitarized zone would then separate the two sides.

It seems probable that in the period from July 20th until a meeting of the Political Bureau in late September the Central Committee Directorate for Southern Viet-Nam was told to exercise extreme vigilance until the ceasefires went into effect, and then to regroup into the provisional assembly areas and await further instructions. No doubt French actions were being studied with care, especially in the north, and American intentions were being closely scrutinized during this critical period.

MAP 2-3

VIETNAM: PROVISIONAL ASSEMBLY AREAS



SOURCE: Anita L. Nutt, Troika on Trial, Vol.3, p.44.

Demonstrations organized to welcome the restoration of peace, although reported as early as July,⁶⁹ did not really take shape until August 1st when they occurred simultaneously in Hue, Da-Nang and Saigon-Cholon.⁷⁰ The demonstrations were suppressed in both Da-Nang, where one person was reportedly killed and two wounded, and Saigon-Cholon, where police fired into a crowd wounding several people. It is unclear what role the Lao Dong Party had in all this. The demonstration in Saigon-Cholon occurred ten days before the ceasefire came into effect and thus its suppression was predictable. Reports at that time said the August 1st demonstration welcoming the Geneva Agreements was called as a riposte to an earlier gathering on July 18th protesting partition.⁷¹ Perhaps as many as 5,000 were mobilized for the August 1st event, and later claims that 50,000 were involved must be dismissed as excessive exaggeration.⁷² The significance

⁶⁹ Vu Can, "The People's Struggles Against the US-Diem Regime from 1954 to 1960", Vietnamese Studies (1968), Nos.18/19, p.103.

⁷⁰ Radio France-Asie in English to the Far East, 2330 GMT, August 9, 1954; and "Vietnam Sets Up 2 Sedition Courts", The New York Times (August 4, 1954), p.2.

⁷¹ Radio France-Asie in English to Southeast Asia, 2330 GMT, November 5, 1954.

⁷² Vu Can, "The People's Struggles Against the US-Diem Regime", op.cit., p.95; and Xu Uy Nam Bo, Tinh Hinh Phong Trao Dau Tranh Chinh Tri o Nam Bo Tu Hoa Binh Lap Lai Den Hien Nay [The Situation of the Political Struggle Movement in Nam Bo From the Restoration of Peace to the Present] (typescript, circa 1960/61). This is a companion piece to Tinh Hinh Nam Bo; it was acquired by the author while on field work in Saigon in 1972. An English translation was published in United States Department of Defense Intelligence Information Report (February 20, 1970), Report No.6-028-0088-70, CDEC Document Log Number 01-0535-70. Cited hereafter as Tinh Hinh Phong Trao.

of the event is that in the aftermath of the police shootings a Movement for the Defense of the Peace and the Geneva Agreements was organized in Saigon-Cholon, and branches were soon established in Hue and Da-Lat. In brief the Party's underground was now beginning to flex its political muscles.

IV. THE SEPTEMBER, 1954, POLITBURO CONFERENCE

Sometime around the third week of September, the dates have not been stated officially,⁷³ the Political Bureau of the Lao Dong Party held a conference of enormous consequence. The timing is worth noting: it occurred after the initial regroupment into provisional assembly areas and before the start of the final regroupment into the northern regroupment zone and it occurred after an eight-nation conference in Manila had formed the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. Finally, if the dating of the conference is correct, it occurred at the height of a political crisis in Saigon between the newly appointed Premier, Ngo Dinh Diem, and the chief of staff of the Army, General Nguyen Van Hinh. Each of these events were to shape the final conference resolution. At this meeting the Political Bureau adopted a long-range policy which would allow the Lao Dong Party to synchronize its policies internationally, in the north and in the south so as to bring about the complete implementation of the Geneva Agreements, as the Party interpreted its provisions.

⁷³ Ban Nghien Cuu Lich Su Dang Trung Uong, Bon Muoi Lam Nam Hoat Dong Cua Dang Lao Dong Viet Nam, op.cit., p.80.

In 1954 the Lao Dong Party still based its analysis of world affairs on Zhdanov's "two camp theory".⁷⁴ According to the VWP interpretation the world was seen as divided into two blocs, one composed of the forces of peace led by the Soviet Union and the other ~~composed of the forces of peace led by the Soviet Union and the~~ ~~other~~ composed of the forces of war, led by the American imperialists. The newly established DRVN was declared to be part of the democratic and peace front led by the USSR. This bloc in the Party's view was "becoming more and more prosperous" while the bloc led by the American imperialists was "becoming more and more isolated". The American imperialists were thus trying to provoke war because of their increasing decline. For example this is why the United States was pushing for military alliances in Europe (EDC) and Asia (SEATO). These pacts would allow the United States to encircle both the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China and attack the socialist camp.

The American-led bloc favouring war was enmeshed in difficulties because of competition among the capitalist powers. In particular, the American imperialists were striving to replace France in Indochina. The French capitalists were divided into two groups, those who were deemed American puppets and those who were "pacifists" and rejected the policies of the U.S.

⁷⁴ Working Paper, Appendices, Item 200, passim. Unattributed quotations in the following paragraphs are taken from this source.

In the view of the VWP the strategy of the bloc favouring peace, on the other hand, was seen as achieving success, as an increasing number of people were being united in a broad anti-imperialist front. The policy of the peace bloc was based on five principles⁷⁵ which were endorsed by the world's peoples: (1) reciprocal respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, (2) mutual non-aggression; (3) non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries, (4) equality and mutual interest and (5) peaceful coexistence.

With regard to Indochina, the Geneva Conference was seen as evidence for the view that "[a]ny international conflict could be resolved by negotiations ..."⁷⁶ However peace could only be maintained if it were defended properly. Thus leaders of the VWP viewed North Viet-Nam as an integral part of a "Front for Peace" whose object in unifying the country was to deny its human and material resources to the American imperialists. Success in this endeavour was seen as contributing to the isolation of the U.S. imperialists internationally thus helping to thwart its "war-like schemes".

Lao Dong Party policy in the north, designed to carry out the building of socialism, aimed at political consolidation and economic reconstruction. An editorial

⁷⁵ These are of course the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, agreed to by Chou En-lai and Nehru and U Nu in 1954. Their history from their Indonesian origins to their adoption by India is traced in a letter from Nehru to Russell Fifield in his The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia, op.cit., Appendix B, pp.510-511.

⁷⁶ Working Paper, Appendices, Item 200, p.4.

in Nhan Dan described these tasks as they were listed in the Political Bureau's resolution: "to achieve agrarian reform, restor[e] and increas[e] production and strengthen...the people's army so as to consolidate northern Vietnam..."⁷⁷

In other words, the North was to constitute the foundation for the building of socialism. This in itself would protect the peace and influence the political struggle in the south. This was explained by a Central Committee directive:

The results which we have acquired, and the progress which we will make in the task of reconstruction will constitute [the] firm initial base ... on which the reconstruction of the entire country will be based after the general elections. The results will be effective enough to incite [sic] the population of the South to struggle in favor of the application of the Geneva Agreements...⁷⁸

Lao Dong Party policy in the south was aimed at carrying out the Geneva Agreements, and reorganizing and reorientating the Party and its united front in the "new period" so that the political provisions of the Geneva Agreements would be strictly implemented and that the general elections scheduled for 1956 would be held. Thus Party policy carried out on three fronts (internationally, in the north, and in the south) was to be integrated in such a way that each would reinforce the other, and that the combined force of all three would lead the Lao Dong

⁷⁷ "Let Us Unite Ourselves in Thought, Realize Inner Solidarity, and Resolutely Struggle to Accomplish the New Tasks", Nhan Dan (March 3, 1955) as broadcast by Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0600 GMT, March 3, 1955.

⁷⁸ Working Paper, Appendices, Item 200, p.10.

Party towards victory. This was spelled out by the Politburo in a resolution issued after its September meeting:

the general task of our Party is: to unite and lead the people in the struggle for the implementation of the armistice agreement, forestalling and overthrowing all schemes to undermine this agreement so as to consolidate peace; to strive to complete the land reform, restore and increase production, step up the build-up of the people's army to strengthen the North; to maintain and step up the political struggle of the Southern people, with a view to consolidating peace, achieving reunification, completing independence and democracy in the whole country.⁷⁹

The Central Committee Directorate in the south was accordingly charged with two broad areas of responsibility: (1) implementing the Geneva Agreements and (2) reorganizing the Party and its mass organization, the Lien Viet Front, to win the forthcoming elections. The implementation of the Geneva Agreement was seen as a two step process: carrying out the military provisions and then carrying out the political provisions. The first step was to be initiated during the three hundred day regroupment period. The second step was to commence immediately with a political struggle movement demanding consultations between "the competent authorities of the two zones" to begin planning for the 1956 general elections.

Party reorganization had one main purpose: to prepare for a period of clandestine activity in which formerly "liberated areas" were to be reoccupied by the

⁷⁹ An Outline History of the Viet Nam Workers' Party, op.cit., p.81.

State of Viet-Nam and French authorities. This meant that different policies would have to be designed for areas of varying degrees of Party control: base areas, areas of contested control and "enemy" controlled areas.

The Lien Viet Front, although not formally disbanded until September, 1955, was also slated for reorganization. Its functional constituents, the national salvation associations (hoi cuu quoc), were disbanded. Rural members were channelled into semi-legal mutual work exchange, mutual assistance and social welfare organizations, or into legal associations for farmers and women.⁸⁰ The village-based administration, the committee of resistance and administration (Uy Ban Khang Chien Hanh Chanh), was to be modified so it could adjust its functions to a new status.

The massive program of reorganization and redirection was begun during the regroupment into the provisional assembly areas. It was to be completed by the date of final regroupment. On the basis of external evidence this reorientation probably took place during the months from September, 1954 until February, 1955 when many of the officials connected with the Central Committee Directorate for Southern Viet-Nam regrouped north.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.21.

⁸¹ "A biographic intelligence summary issued in 1961 based on agent reports compiled during the Indochina war with France", Working Paper, Appendices, Item 11, pp.1-2; See also: Carlyle A. Thayer, "Southern Revolutionary Organizations and the Vietnam Workers' Party: Continuity and Change, 1954-1974", in Zasloff and Brown, eds., Communism in Indochina, op.cit., pp.31-35.

V. REORGANIZATION IN THE SOUTH

At the time of the ceasefire the Lao Dong Party had a southern membership of some 60,000 comrades. After reorganization this number was reduced to 15,000 in 1957.⁸² An unknown percentage, certainly very small, regrouped to the north. Others had their Party membership cancelled. This action was taken on the basis of a cadre's morale, past activities and class origin and was conducted at all levels from province to village.⁸³

Initial reorientation was based on a study of such topics as "the significance of the victory achieved at Geneva", "the new Party line in an era of peace", and "on the immediate tasks". These differed, as Ho Chi Minh pointed out, according to the position of the Party in each area.

The basic organizational structure for the political struggle movement was a familiar organizational device the united front. As has already been indicated, the Lien Viet Front had outlived its usefulness in the new phase of political struggle. The Party intended to replace it with another united front with a much wider appeal which would even embrace former enemies and collaborators. The new front, however, was to be organized over a period of time, step-by-step. In the interim the Party chose to rely on three types of organizations with which to wage the

⁸² Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, pp.24-25.

⁸³ Ibid., p.25; Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., pp.32-33; Working Paper, Appendices, Item 200, pp.15-16.

political struggle, legal, semi-legal and secret groups. These were to be based in the cities as well as the countryside. Some groups were to be ad hoc, while others were to be permanent.⁸⁴

In the countryside the Party and its youth group were to go underground and lead a clandestine existence. Certain self-defence military units and specialised assassination committees were to become covert also.⁸⁵

A variety of semi-legal organizations in the rural areas provided the next concentric ring of Party influence. These consisted of: war veterans' associations, a student movement, rubber plantation workers' associations, village self-defence groups, mutual labour exchange and mutual assistance groups, war refugee committees, committees to protect the moral life of the people, committees to propagate the national language, mass education organizations, committees to protect the interests of prisoners and internees, etc.⁸⁶ Legal associations in the country consisted essentially of two groups: the farmers' association and the women's association.

Party activities in the cities were promoted and intensified in the post-ceasefire period. Obviously both the party and its youth association remained secret. In terms of semi-legal groups the Party seems to have

⁸⁴ Tinh Hinh Phong Trao, pp.1-6; Working Paper, Appendices, Item 200, pp.15-18.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp.15-16; Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.22; and Vietnam News Agency in English Morse to Southeast Asia, 0705 GMT, July 3, 1955.

⁸⁶ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, pp.14-16; and Tinh Hinh Phong Trao, pp.1-2.

developed a flexible philosophy: form groups when a certain issue arises or penetrate groups that have formed without Party assistance. Examples of the former include: war refugee committees, the movement to prevent the decay of the national culture, the movement to aid the victims of the fighting (formed during the Binh Xuyen crisis), people's education committees, and labour youth organizations. Groups penetrated by the Party included the Movement for the Defense of the Peace and the Geneva Agreements, student associations, women's associations and even the fire prevention sections.⁸⁷ Legal groups used by the Party in the cities included: athletic clubs, ancestor worship cults, trade unions and various Chinese associations.

Each of these groups and associations pursued certain objectives related to the political struggle movement. Their aims were either for "the defense of the peace" or for "social welfare". The defence of the peace category included all activities related to the Geneva Agreements. Their objectives may be summarised by the following slogans: demand democratic liberties, demand consultations with the north, pursue the normalisation of relations between the two zones, protest terrorism, resist reprisals, and demand general elections.⁸⁸ Social welfare slogans included: protest the return of landlords, guarantee the lives and property of the people, improve living

⁸⁷ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.21; "Translation of a Lao Dong Party document acquired on November 29, 1954, in the Saigon-Cholon area", Working Paper, Appendices, Item 29, pp.1 and 4.

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp.1-6; Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, pp.15-16; Tinh Hinh Phong Trao, pp.16-17.

conditions, fight conscription and encourage desertion from the Army, demand reduction in rents and interest rates, increase the number of schools, fight unemployment, oppose piracy and theft, resist corvee labour, protest refugee camp conditions, resist expulsion from homes, boycott elections and support the workers' demands.⁸⁹

The political struggle movement was designed to defend the political rights and welfare of the people (as achieved during the First Indochina War and as enumerated in the Geneva Agreements) in the face of "enemy" (i.e. French and State of Viet-Nam) encroachment on formerly liberated areas. In other words, the Party operated on the assumption that all organizations not under its control or allied with it were both dangerous and illegitimate. Any attempt by a group to interfere with Party aims would be resisted. Action in this regard was to be based on the Geneva Agreements and accordingly great effort was made in the reorientation programs to instruct cadres how to file petitions and engage in other forms of peaceful protest for these ends. The object was to bring pressure to bear on the International Control Commission, the Mixed Commissions and the commands of the French Union Forces and the Army of the State of Viet-Nam to intervene and stop activity which the Party felt violated the agreements.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Ibid.; Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, pp.15-16; and Working Paper, Appendices, Item 29, pp.1-6.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.1.

Action which threatened the social welfare of the people were to be met by similar protests to the village council of notables, military post chiefs, provincial authorities, etc. The foregoing should highlight the fact that the Lao Dong Party saw its initial tasks as being essentially defensive and ones which were to be carried out on the local level. Therefore, great considerations was given as to how to preserve the integrity of the revolutionary movement in the face of attempts to supplant it by the new administration.

One key document,⁹¹ issued for the guidance of provincial level authorities by the Eastern Interzone committee dealt with the crucial questions of self-defence and village control. The Party recognised that "security of the people's lives and possessions" was essential if the political struggle objectives of "strengthen the peace", "work for the triumph of democracy", and "achieve independence and unity" were to be obtained. The ability to provide security rested in turn on a knowledge of how to organize the police, notables and troops for self-defence.

Self-defence groups would have to be built up from small groups into larger ones. The Party suggested that youths be organized for this purpose, initially, at least, so that their efforts could be directed against bandits. War veterans and former Party security men would provide the backbone of this self-defence movement.

⁹¹ Ibid., pp.1-6; this directive appears to be the application on the local level of the resolution of the Politburo of September, 1954.

Party policy towards the village councils and notables underwent a change. It was recognised that the war-time policy of neutralising them was no longer appropriate. According to the new policy

the activity of these organisms [sic] is in accord with the Geneva Agreement, for we are convinced that during the next two years, until the general elections, it is necessary to have an administrative machine to provisionally arrange the affairs of the country which is occupied by the enemy. Such a machine is indispensable for the South Vietnam zone.⁹²

In areas where the police and council of notables had already been neutralised the revolutionary movement's organizational structure was to remain intact. In areas which the "enemy" planned to install new councils, the Party was to gain control over them by secretly introducing its own sympathizers. It was not intended to use the Party's administrative cadres but to rely on its supporters from among the farmers, poor peasants, even the rich peasantry and the landowning classes if necessary, and as a last resort, even former notables could be used. This tactic was designed to protect the Party from direct exposure to security officials of the State of Viet-Nam.

VI. THE PARTY AND THE HINH CRISIS

As was mentioned above, the September Political Bureau conference met while a political crisis was brewing in Saigon. The crux of the matter was whether Premier Ngo Dinh Diem, recently appointed to his post, would be able to exercise full control over the Army or not. This issue

⁹² Ibid., p.6.

touched on a raw nerve in the relationship between the Chief of State, Bao Dai, and the man he appointed as Premier with full powers, Ngo Dinh Diem. Interconnected with this issue was the question of France's prerogatives in Viet-Nam and the divergence between French and American policies. Gen. Nguyen Van Hinh, as chief of staff, claimed he derived his authority from Bao Dai and that only Bao Dai could dismiss him. Gen. Hinh accordingly refused to comply with instructions issued by the Cabinet ordering him to retire from active service. He later refused to obey the Premier's orders that he leave for a six-week "study tour" of France. By the time the Political Bureau met Gen. Hinh had twice refused to leave Viet-Nam and had sent a cable to Bao Dai asking him to intervene. Nine members of Diem's first Cabinet, only appointed in July, resigned. Rumours that Gen. Hinh was planning a coup d'etat abounded and these prompted the American Ambassador, Donald Heath, to warn Gen. Hinh and other leaders that the U.S. government would not recognize a government established by force. Cuts in financial and economic aid were threatened. These events received wide publicity in the press.⁹³

⁹³ "Vietnam Premier Ousts Army Chief", The New York Times (September 12, 1954), pp.1 and 2; United Press dispatch in ibid., (September 13, 1954), p.1; "'Ousted' Army Chief Replaced in Vietnam", ibid., (September 14, 1954), p.1; Dispatch from Paul Kennedy in Saigon in ibid., (September 15, 1954), p.1; Tillman Durdin dispatch from Saigon in ibid., (September 18, 1954), p.3; United Press dispatch from Saigon in ibid., (September 19, 1954), p.2; Tillman Durdin dispatch from Saigon in ibid., (September 20, 1954), p.6; "5 Refugees Slain in Saigon Clash", ibid., (September 22, 1954), p.3; Radio France-Asie in English to Southeast Asia, 2330 GMT, September 24, 1954; and Edward G. Lansdale, In the Midst of Wars: An American's Mission to Southeast Asia, (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), pp.171-182.

The general political situation in southern Viet-Nam at this time was one of great confusion. An American journalist has described the atmosphere in this way:

there was scarcely any administrative talent left, and disorder, abetted by banditry, mounted in the countryside. Communications everywhere were in a state of collapse, the Vietminh having sabotaged the railroads and set up obstacles on the roads and in the rivers and canals. Vietnamese soldiers were deserting by the thousands, and for a time Diem's actual authority scarcely extended beyond Saigon itself, where he had only a single battalion of loyal troops upon which he could completely depend.⁹⁴

How did the Political Bureau react to these events? No formal statement was made nor was the Diem-Hinh crisis alluded to in public announcements which reported the meeting's decisions. A possible clue might be found however, in a Vietnam News Agency (VNA) broadcast at this time. The Diem-Hinh split was seen as a reflection of the contradictions between the American and French imperialists. According to VNA, the Americans were using Diem as their tool to supplant the French and to turn Viet-Nam into an American colony. In order for the U.S. to carry out their plot, VNA said, it was necessary to gain control of both the Army and the administration. Since Hinh was pro-French, his ouster would aid the Americans. VNA also expressed the view that the root of the contradiction was the hatred of the people for Diem and

⁹⁴ Peter Schmid, "Free Indo-China Fights Against Time", Commentary (January 1955), Vol.19, No.1, p.28; and Robert Shaplen, The Lost Revolution: The U.S. in Vietnam, 1946-1966 (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p.115.

For this reason Ngo Dinh Diem ought to be overthrown. The people in South Vietnam strongly urge the overthrowing of Ngo Dinh Diem and the formation of a new government from which all the lackeys of the American imperialists and the French warmongers would be eliminated.⁹⁵

A later broadcast by the Voice of Nam-Bo also called for the overthrow of Diem. It explained the matter in more detail: Diem was an American lackey who was supported by the French warmongers. He constituted "a great obstacle to the consolidation of peace, national independence, and unity" and for this reason "the population of the south is resolved to overthrow him".⁹⁶ Since the Political Bureau accepted the distinction between American and French imperialism and between French warmongers and "pacifists", this call for Diem's overthrow must be seen in the context of opposing the stronger force (American imperialism) and encouraging the group most favourable to the Party's interests (the French "pacifists"). The Voice of Nam Bo in explaining this reminded its listeners that "...the French government is bound to consolidate peace in Vietnam and respect the agreement. It is an obligation..."⁹⁷

A Party history of this period defined the current task as

not to overthrow the enemy government as in the last Resistance, but to compel the enemy to apply freedom, and democracy, gradually replace the enemy government [with] our own and create favourable conditions for the

⁹⁵ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1200 GMT, September 23, 1954.

⁹⁶ Voice of Nam Bo in Vietnamese to South Viet-Nam, 1000 GMT, September 25, 1954.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

reunification of the country in accordance with the Geneva Agreement.⁹⁸

This was spelled out more concisely elsewhere:

"oppose the enemy in a tenacious way, avoiding rightist or leftist tendencies as well as assassinations and all semi-military measures as were used during the resistance".⁹⁹ Although this Party retained military forces in the south they did not use them to exploit the Hinh crisis.

The question poses itself: why did the Party leave military forces in the south? Undoubtedly one answer lies in the desire to provide some form of self-defence for Party cadre and installations. A former member of the Party's provincial committee in Tay Ninh suggested another answer:

Why should the Party proclaim political activity as the main line but retain military forces? From a revolutionary point, the South was still a backward agricultural country, without any democratic conditions in which parliamentary struggle could be effective: it was still in the 'national liberation' stage. In that stage, if one wants to carry out what we call the 'revolutionary mission', force is the decisive element. Without it nothing can be accomplished.¹⁰⁰

Various estimates by U.S., French and Vietnamese (State of Viet-Nam) intelligence organizations for the 1954-1960 period placed PAVN armed strength in the 5,000 to 10,000 range, of whom no more than 2,000 were ever considered active.¹⁰¹ At the time of the Geneva Conference

⁹⁸ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.27.

⁹⁹ Working Paper, Appendices, Item 200, p.17.

¹⁰⁰ Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., p.35.

¹⁰¹ "U.S. Perceptions of the Insurgency, 1954-1960", in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab 4, p.25.

PAVN strength in the south was estimated to have been as high as 100,000 men. Around 90,000 were said to have regrouped north.¹⁰² Those remaining in the south were assigned to one of three tasks: (1) some were transferred into political and administrative jobs, (2) others were retained in secret military units dispersed in base areas and (3) the remainder were assigned to skeletal units at province level and below.¹⁰³ Major concentrations were stationed in the resistance base areas in Ca Mau, Go Cong, in the That Son (Seven Mountains) area along the Cambodian border, in the Plain of Reeds, in the highlands of Central Viet-Nam and near the border of the northern regroupment zone.¹⁰⁴

What were the Party's intentions in this matter? It seems doubtful to argue on the basis of this decision (to leave military units in the south) that the Party did not expect general elections to take place and had therefore prepared a secret military force to seize power

¹⁰² "Rebellion Against My-Diem", *ibid.*, Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab 2, p.49; Murti, Vietnam Divided, *op.cit.*, p.224; J.J. Zasloff, Origins of the Insurgency in South Vietnam, 1954-1960: The Role of the Southern Vietminh Cadres, (Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation, May 1968), Memorandum RM-5163/2-ISA/ARPA, p.1; "Commentary: Bernard B. Fall on Bui Van Luong", in Richard W. Lindholm, editor, Viet-Nam The First Five Years : An International Symposium (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1959), p.57.

¹⁰³ Race, War Comes to Long An, *op.cit.*, p.35.

¹⁰⁴ "Rebellion Against My-Diem", in United States - Vietnam Relations, *op.cit.*, Book 2, IV.A.5.Tab 2, p.9; and Anita L. Nutt, Troika on Trial: Control or Compromise? (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, September 1967), Vol.I, p.251.

at the appropriate moment should disorder break out as happened, for example, following the Diem-Hinh crisis.¹⁰⁵ Two points deserve stressing. Firstly, the PAVN units appeared to have been widely dispersed throughout south Viet-Nam. Even at moments of greatest instability, as with the Binh Xuyen crisis of March-April, 1955 and the events of May 1, 1955 when a Revolutionary Committee appeared to have seized power momentarily, there appears to be no evidence that these PAVN units were concentrated on the approaches to Saigon, poised for a lightning coup d'main. Secondly, the relative small size of the PAVN force, 10,000 men at most, compares unfavourably with other military forces organized at that time: French Union Forces (100,000 to 176,000), Army of Viet-Nam (170,000 to 265,000), Cao Dai Forces (10,000 to 25,000), Hoa Hao Forces (10,000 to 40,000) and Binh Xuyen Forces (5,000 to 7,100).¹⁰⁶

The Lao Dong Party probably tried to prepared for every contingency imaginable at their September 1954 Political Bureau conference. The evidence presented here,

¹⁰⁵ Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., p.32.

¹⁰⁶ The estimates for each category varied throughout this period. There are certain obvious problems of definition with respect to the sect forces. However the point being made is a general one: after regroupment Communist military strength was numerically weaker than the array of forces opposing them; for estimates see: "U.S. Training of the Vietnamese National Army, 1954-1959", in United States - Vietnam Relations, Book 2, IV.A.4., pp.0, R, V, W, X, FF, GG, HH, and II; dispatch by Dana Adams Schmidt from Washington in The New York Times (September 29, 1954), pp.1 and 5; United Press dispatch from Saigon in ibid. (May 28, 1955), p.3; and Fishel, "One Vietnam or Two?", p.362.

and their actions subsequently, indicate that the Party still had confidence that the political settlement envisioned in the Geneva Agreements would be carried out. Despite reservations and misgivings, this assessment of the future is what the Lao Dong Party acted upon. In so doing the Party underestimated the speed by which America would displace the French as the predominate foreign influence on the State of Viet-Nam, and the alacrity with which Ngo Dinh Diem would dodge political roadblocks set for him by his opponents (the Binh Xuyen, the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects, Bao Dai supporters and other anti-Diemist elements). These trends, however, were not so discernable in the immediate post-Geneva Conference period; what seemed more evident was the instability of the non-Communist position which carried within it the seeds of anarchy.¹⁰⁷

VII. REGROUPMENT AND THE BEGINNINGS OF POLITICAL STRUGGLE

After the September meeting the Political Bureau's resolution was transmitted to its Directorate in the south which in turn issued detailed directives for its implementation.¹⁰⁸ Final regroupment to the north

¹⁰⁷ United States Central Intelligence Agency, Post-Geneva Outlook in Indo-China, op.cit.; and United States Central Intelligence Agency, Current Trends in South Vietnam, Special National Intelligence Estimate (September 15, 1954), SNIE 63-6-54 in United States - Vietnam Relations, Book 10, pp.751-752.

¹⁰⁸ Working Paper, Appendices, Item 29, p.3, refers to instructions nos.16/CT-K (September 24, 1954) and 43, 45/CT/TWC. The former probably refers to a directive flowing from the Politburo conference; the latter is probably a directive issued by the Central Committee

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proceeded apace. Withdrawal from the Ham-Tan - Xuyen-Moc area was completed before the deadline. The first instalment of troop regroupment from Binh-Dinh - Quang-Ngai were also completed. Despite a series of incidents press reports stated that the relative smoothness of the movement was taken as evidence that the Lao Dong Party was fulfilling its obligations.¹⁰⁹ At the end of October regroupment from the Plain of Reeds as well as the second instalment from Binh-Dinh - Quang-Ngai was successfully carried out. In February, Ca Mau was evacuated thus leaving only one provisional assembly area left south of the demarcation line. When the third and final instalment from Binh-Dinh - Quang-Ngai (scheduled for completion by May 19, 1955) was finished the partitioning of Viet-Nam would be complete.

During the withdrawal of military forces into the provisional assembly areas Party cadres began an immediate, and in some cases hurried, study of the Geneva Agreements and their significance. Preparations were also feverishly undertaken to decide who was to regroup north and who was to remain. Similar decisions had to be made concerning

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Directorate for Southern Viet-Nam sometimes abbreviated in Vietnamese "TWC" (Trung Uong Cuc). See also: Working Paper, Appendices, Item 200, footnote 16 for what appears to be a paraphrase of the September Politburo resolution.

¹⁰⁹ Nutt, Troika on Trial, op.cit., Vol.1, pp.175-178; and dispatch by Tillman Durdin from Saigon in The New York Times (September 29, 1954), p.5.

equipment. Much of it was stored in caches.¹¹⁰ There was undoubtedly much confusion among both cadres and civilians as this process took place.

Despite the fact that the Geneva Agreements made provision for the regroupment of both military and civilian personnel, military regroupees to the north outnumbered their civilian counterparts two to one. Table 2-2 below sets out the figures by provisional assembly area.

Table 2-2 CIVIL AND MILITARY REGROUPMENT

Provisional Assembly Area:	Soldiers	Civilians	Total
Ham-Tan - Xuyen-Moc	10,700	5,300	16,000
Plain of Reeds	13,500	6,500	20,000
Ca Mau province	20,000	9,900	29,900
Binh-Dinh - Quang-Ngai	42,700	21,300	64,000
Total	86,900	43,000	129,900

SOURCE: B.S.N. Murti, Vietnam Divided, p.224.

The civilian figures include administrative cadres former prisoners, their families and others. Included among the cadres were those termed "special cases", that is well-known Party members, security service personnel and administrators who were disliked locally. Included among civilians regrouped to the north were children,

¹¹⁰ Nutt, Troika on Trial, op.cit., Vol.1, pp.250-254; Warner, "Interview with General Michel de Brebissen", op.cit., p.1, "(t)here were indeed arms caches and they were intended for future use in his [de Brebisson's] opinion. At this point he showed me an intelligence report, dated 4 January 1955 and classified 'Secret'."

youths, technical specialists, highlanders and non-Communist cadres.¹¹¹ Some in the later category may even have been used to "fill-out" the departing military ranks. As stated above, the vast majority of the PAVN forces were regrouped.

The bulk of the war-time administrators, from regional level downward, remained. In fact, there was no provision in the Geneva Agreements which made this illegal. Indeed, since the Party at that time expected elections to be held within two years, it is doubtful they would have dismantled their political machine and thus given an advantage to their opponents. Both Party and non-Party cadres were classified, trained and given assignments. Party members who were known were dispersed to other areas where they would act as "single-contact members" (don tuyen).¹¹² Their tasks would be to organize new cells and participate in the various organizations to be used in the political struggle movement. Party cadres who were not well known remained in place where

¹¹¹ Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., p.32; Nutt, Troika on Trial, op.cit., Vol.1, pp.175-176; Gerald C. Hickey, Preliminary Research Report on the PMS (Saigon: Michigan State University Vietnam Advisory Group, June 1957), p.26, a copy of this document was located in the Wason Collection, Olin Library, Cornell University, Interview with Tran Kim Tuyen, Saigon, July 13, 1972; Tuyen headed the Service des Etudes Politiques, Economiques et Sociales (SEPES), an intelligence organization which operated during the Diem years.

¹¹² Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., p.33; Interview with Phan The Ngoc, Saigon, June 8, 1972.

they were reorganized into small three-man cells. Their tasks were to carry out Party policy covertly. Most cadres at the village level were instructed to obtain "legal status", avoid arrest and take up legitimate occupations until they were contacted.

Other cadres were directed to move to the cities and obtain "legal status" too. This they did by obtaining identity cards, registering for the census, etc. These people, as well as well as the covert penetration agents, were to form the base of the urban struggle movement which was to take shape. The government administration was penetrated even further and in central Viet-Nam there seems to have been a policy for cadres to turn themselves in, obtain clearance, and then work secretly for the Party.¹¹³

One result of this reorientation was that the organization of the revolutionary movement was rendered - momentarily at least - less efficient. In addition, there seems to have been a drifting away of some of the members and cadres of mass organizations who became inactive. These were people who responded to the ceasefire by returning to their home villages and beginning the task of starting a normal, productive life. Others voluntarily "rallied" to the State of Viet-Nam when army troops moved into their area after withdrawal of PAVN units.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.25; Voice of the Dai Viet National Liberation Troops in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 2300 GMT, December 6, 1955 and 0500 GMT, December 20, 1955.

¹¹⁴ Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., pp.34-36; Zaslloff, Origins of the Insurgency, op.cit., pp.5-6.

Because of the process of phased regroupment (80, 100, 200 and 300 days) this reorientation process was undertaken at a different rate in each of the provisional assembly areas. This allowed the Party, for example, to study the regroupment from Ham-Tan - Xuyen-Moc and apply the lessons learned there to subsequent withdrawals. It was the Party's intention that a reorientated clandestine organization would be able to survive the imposition of the opposing administration. Since, in some areas, Party control stretched back for 8 or 9 years, the Party felt confident of success because they had the people's support. Any attempt to root out the Party and destroy its organizations would be resolutely protested not only in local demonstrations but in appeals to the various mobile teams assigned to the ICSC and to PAVN officers assigned to the Mixed Commissions.¹¹⁵

The first major attempt to use the Geneva Agreements as the legal basis for political struggle is illustrated in the case of the Movement for the Defense of the Peace and the Geneva Agreements.¹¹⁶ This organization was

¹¹⁵ Nutt, Troika on Trial, op.cit., Vol.1, p.176.

¹¹⁶ Devillers and Lacouture, End of a War, op.cit., pp.385-387; Wilfred G. Burchett, Vietnam: Inside Story of the Guerilla War (New York: International Publishers, 1968), pp.120-121; I.M. Shchedrov, A.B. Stukov, Z.M. Zelma and V.N. Rogov, compilers, Fighting Vietnam (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, December 1965), no pagination; the section "Story of Three Prisoners" provides details on Nguyen Huu Tho, Nguyen Van Duong and Pham Huy Thong, all members of the Movement for the Defence of Peace. A copy of this book was located in the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Brown University. Tho was elected chairman of the presidium of the NFL's Central Committee in 1962 at the Front's First Congress. Thong went to the north in 1956 where he became active in literary circles.

established in the aftermath of a demonstration held in Saigon-Cholon on August 1st referred to above. It must be assumed that covert Party agents were associated with this Movement for the Defense of the Peace, yet there is no direct evidence that the Movement itself was created by the Party.¹¹⁷ The Movement was based on a group of left-wing and progressive intellectuals and students who lived in the urban areas. It was initially formed in Saigon-Cholon, and additional branches were soon established elsewhere in southern Vietnam. By that time the Movement had caught the Party's attention as an effective semi-legal organization to which petitions and reports of violations of the Geneva Agreements could be sent.¹¹⁸ It appears that on the local level the Party took the initiative in forming various village-level committees of the Movement for the Protection of Peace.¹¹⁹ It is unknown what relationship the Executive Committee of the Saigon-Cholon Committee had with branches elsewhere, but it was probably very unstructured.

¹¹⁷ Devillers and Lacouture, End of a War, op.cit., p.385; the following individuals, members of the Movement for the Defence of Peace, later held positions on the NFL's Central Committee or became members of the Provisional Revolutionary Government: Nguyen Huu Tho, Trinh Dinh Thao, Phung Van Cung, Huynh Tan Phat, Le Van Huan, Ho Thu, Le Van Tha, Nguyen Long, Nguyen Thi Binh, Dang Quang Minh, Tran Hoai Nam, Nguyen Ngoc Thuong, La Van Phuong, Bui Thi Me, Huynh Van Tam and Le Thanh Nam.

¹¹⁸ Working Paper, Appendices, Item 29, pp.1 and 4.

¹¹⁹ Zasloff, Origins of the Insurgency, op.cit., p.7; and Burchett, Inside Story of the Guerilla War, op.cit., p.120.

Sometime in late October three members of the Saigon-Cholon Peace Committee (as the Movement for the Defence of the Peace was called to distinguish it from the other branches) were arrested. It is unclear whether the three had been involved in protests at a resettlement center on the outskirts of Saigon where certain of the recent refugees from north Viet-Nam embarrassed the authorities in Saigon by asking to be repatriated. In any event these arrests were only the first in a series undertaken by the Diem regime in its efforts to cripple the Peace Movement.¹²⁰

The most damaging arrests were carried out on November 11th when the entire eight-member Executive Committee as well as 23 ordinary members of the Peace Movement were picked up. This followed by three days a demonstration called to protest the arrival of President Eisenhower's special representative to Viet-Nam, General J. Lawton Collins. No doubt the Diem government lost patience with this group which had earlier provoked a scuffle on the occasion of the visit to Saigon of Prime

¹²⁰ Associated Press dispatch from Saigon in The New York Times (December 4, 1954), p.3; Radio France-Asie in English to Vietnam, 0130 GMT, December 5, 1954; Radio VNW in Vietnamese morse to Vietnam, 0205 GMT, November 25, 1954; and Quang Loi, South of the 17th Parallel (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959), pp.25-26. Joseph Weiss, then a member of the Central Intelligence Agency, in a letter to the author dated February 13, 1973, wrote: "(s)pecifically, with regard to the VNA5, VNW, KNL cites, these are legitimate Vietnamese Communist service transmitters (not 'radios' per se) which FBIS was and is still capable of monitoring". Weiss was writing in response to a written request for specific information on these and other radios cited in the FBIS Daily Reports.

Minister Nehru, when they passed out leaflets supporting peaceful coexistence.¹²¹ When the Saigon-Cholon Peace Committee drew attention to the relations between Saigon and Washington at the Collins demonstration they probably touched a very sensitive nerve.

Further arrests totalling 29 in all were carried out in Saigon in December and in March, 1955. The Hue branch of the Movement for the Defense of the Peace was struck twice, once in March and again in April. Simultaneous raids were carried out in Dalat.¹²²

These arrests immediately attracted the attention of the DRVN authorities. Pham Hung, chief of the PAVN High Command delegation in southern Viet-Nam, sent a letter dated November 26th to the command of the French Union Forces protesting the October and November arrests.¹²³ General Van Tien Dung raised the matter at the November 29th meeting of the Joint Commission where he blamed the French for not carrying out their responsibilities under the Geneva Agreements.¹²⁴

Protest statements, demonstrations and the like were quickly mounted in the north. Their aim was to catch international attention and thus bring pressure to bear on

¹²¹ "Nehru Criticized in Saigon", The New York Times (October 31, 1954), p.25; and Devillers and Lacouture, End of a War, op.cit., p.385.

¹²² Loi, South of the 17th Parallel, op.cit., p.26.

¹²³ Voice of Nam Bo in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 1000 GMT, November 27, 1954.

¹²⁴ Voice of Vietnam dictation in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0130 GMT, November 29, 1954.

the French to stop the arrests and secure the release of those jailed. On November 2nd, for example, the Viet-Nam Committee for the Defense of World Peace sent a note to the World Committee for the Defense of Peace protesting the violations of the "democratic rights" of the members of the Saigon-Cholon Peace Committee and demanding their release.¹²⁵ On November 27th a variety of groups (including the Viet-Nam Committee for the Defense of World Peace, the Viet-Nam General Confederation of Labor, the Peasants' National Liaison Bureau, the Viet-Nam Women's Union and the Committee for the Protection of Vietnamese Children) staged a public protest over the arrest of members of the Movement for the Defense of the Peace.¹²⁶

Four of the eight members arrested on November 11th were released twelve days later, but this appeared to be due more to the family connections of one of them, Luu Van Luong, than to the public protests.¹²⁷ Naturally each new wave of arrests generated more protests. The PAVN delegation dutifully raised each matter with their French counterparts at the sessions of the Joint Military Commission. In April the Diem government dramatically

¹²⁵ Radio Hanoi in Vietnamese, 0430 GMT, November 27, 1954; and Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1250 GMT, November 27, 1954.

¹²⁶ Vietnam News Agency in Vietnamese morse to Vietnam, 0930 GMT, November 27, 1954.

¹²⁷ Devillers and Lacouture, End of a War, op.cit., p.386, Luu Van Lang was the father-in-law of the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tran Van Do; Radio Saigon in Vietnamese, 1230 GMT, November 27, 1954.

announced that several of the leaders of the peace movement had been transferred to Hai Phong in the north where they would soon be given the choice of returning to the south or of remaining when the city was turned over to DRVN control. However by May (1955) the issue of the Movement for the Defense of the Peace had been superceded by other events as the focus of attention. At that time the PAVN delegation to the Joint Military Commission requested information on the whereabouts of the "peace partisans" who had been arrested, the French promised to supply the information after making enquiries. The matter then faded in importance. However the pattern of protest was to be repeated over again as a response to reports of alleged violations of the Geneva Agreements by the French and State of Viet-Nam authorities.

VIII. POLITICAL INSTABILITY IN THE SOUTH: DIEM AND THE SECTS

Of greater importance to the Lao Dong Party at this time was the stability of the political situation in southern Viet-Nam and the interaction between the major social forces and the fledgling State of Viet-Nam. There are three aspects to this: the relationship among the groups comprising the State of Viet-Nam, the relationship between the State of Viet-Nam and the other indigenous social forces and finally, the relationship among the sects themselves. The significance of this for the Lao Dong Party, of course, is that a divided opposition which was continually quarrelling was better than a united one.

The State of Viet-Nam, at the time of the Geneva Conference, was a dubious concept in political and legal terms. The French controlled its army and exercised other responsibilities of government normally prerogatives of a sovereign state. Even though both France and America tried hard on a government-to-government level to agree on a common approach in southern Viet-Nam, it proved almost impossible on the local level. Political and military operatives of both governments ignored their own country's policies and backed Vietnamese groups in competition with their ally.¹²⁸

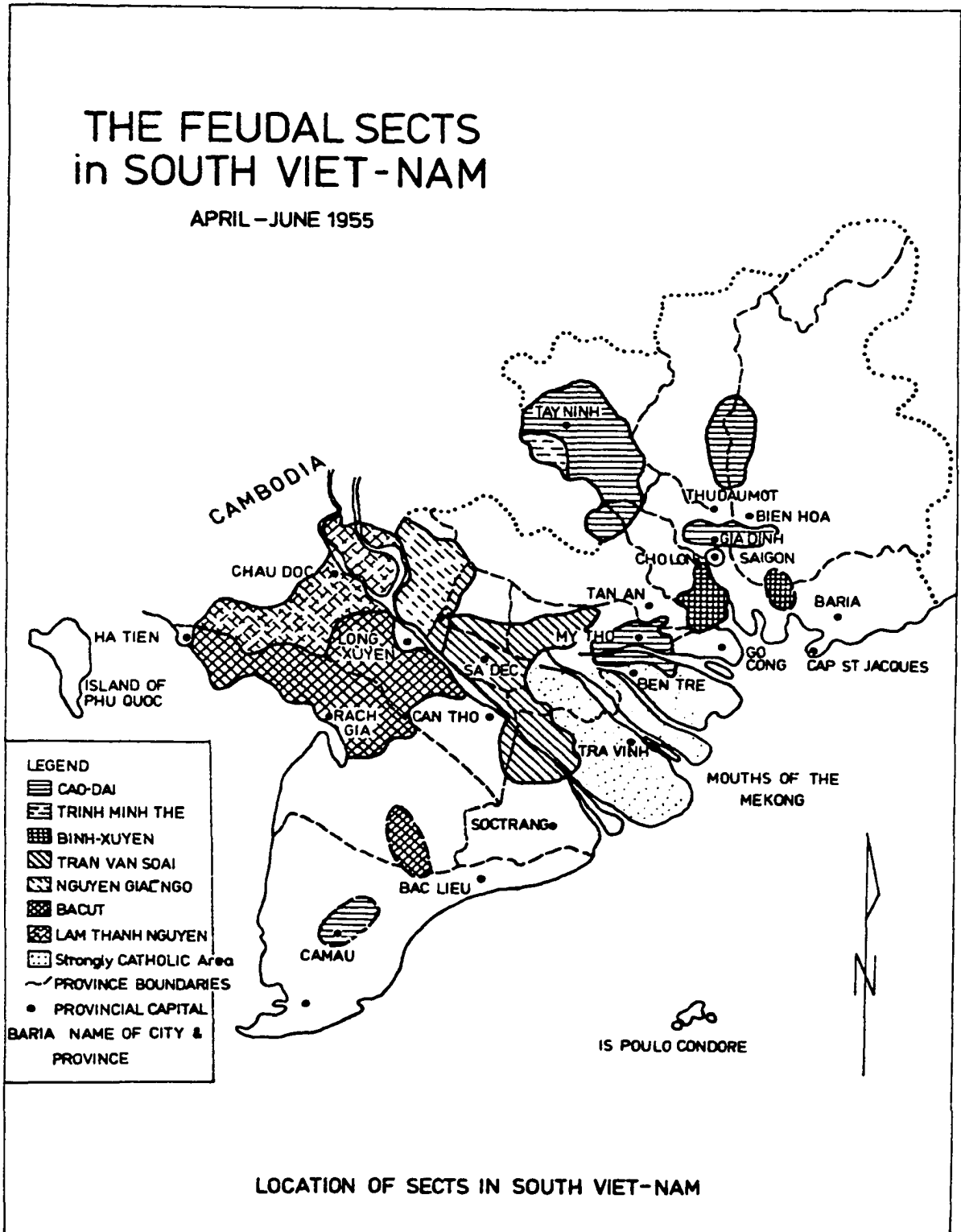
The State of Viet-Nam was split in other ways: there was a continuous tension between the Chief of State and his Premier, there were differences between certain Army leaders and the Premier and there were the curious differences between the Binh Xuyen sect, which controlled the police and security services, and the Premier. In addition to all this, there were two large sect groups, the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao which ran, literally, "states within a state". Each of the sects, in turn, was subdivided into particular war lord factions (see Map 2-4).

When the Lao Dong Party met in September, Premier Diem was facing his first grave crisis: a challenge to his authority by the chief of staff of the Army, General Nguyen Van Hinh. This was eventually resolved in the

¹²⁸ For one side of the story see: Lansdale, In the Midst of Wars, op.cit., pp.316-317.

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Premier's favour in early December 1954 when Gen. Hinh obeyed Bao Dai's instructions summoning him to France. Prior to the resolution of this crisis, however, at least one plot to overthrow Diem had been thwarted.¹²⁹

The Diem-Hinh confrontation was also marked by the intervention of Bao Dai who attempted to obtain sect backing for a new government. His gambit was to use the leader of the Binh Xuyen, Le Van Vien, in his approach to other sect leaders.¹³⁰ This move failed when Diem enlarged his Cabinet with precisely these men. It will be recalled from earlier discussion that Diem's first Cabinet had resigned. The key appointments to the second Cabinet formed on September 24th were Nguyen Thanh Phuong of the Cao Dai and Tran Van Soai of the Hoa Hao as Ministers of State without portfolio. Additional appointees from the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao filled other vacancies.

In the following months sporadic fighting broke out in the countryside between elements of Ba Cut's Hoa Hao forces and Cao Dai units. The scramble to gain control of recently evacuated DRVN territory in the Plain of Reeds was at issue.¹³¹ The same problem also brought Ba Cut's units into conflict with the Army. The matter intensified

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.175; Lansdale whisked Hinh's staff on a tour of the Philippines on the eve of the plotter's coup.

¹³⁰ Marjorie Weiner, "Government and Politics in South Vietnam, 1954-1956", M.A. Thesis, Cornell University, 1960, pp.31-42.

¹³¹ United Press dispatch from Saigon in The New York Times (March 9, 1955), p.5 and United Press dispatch in ibid. (March 13, 1955), pp.1 and 4.

in December when reports revealed that fighting was taking place between certain Hoa Hao units, between Ba Cut's forces and certain Cao Dai units and between the Army and Ba Cut. The fighting continued into January and during the following month shifted location as the Army and Ba Cut's forces squared off to determine who would first "liberate" the Ca Mau area after the final withdrawal of PAVN units.¹³² As it turned out, these were only the beginning rounds of a fight which was to last well into 1957.

At the same time Ngo Dinh Diem succeeded in playing on the factionalism of his opponents who, in mid-September, had managed to provide a facade of unity. American support for Diem, even over French objections, proved decisive. On December 31, 1954, the U.S. government announced that it would no longer give aid to Viet-Nam via the French as was customary, but as of the New Year would mount direct aid to the State of Viet-Nam.¹³³ This move undercut the French position which had used the "power of the purse" to encourage policies to its liking. This shift in American policy also touched directly upon the vital issue of subsidies to the sect armies which the

¹³² United Press dispatch from Saigon in *ibid.* (April 4, 1955), p.3.

¹³³ "Indochina Aid Now Direct", *ibid.* (January 1, 1955), p.4; at the same time France ended the Pau Agreement of 1950 and transferred its control of finances and economic matters to the State of Viet-Nam; "General Monetary and Commercial Convention Between France and State of Viet-Nam" Notes et Etudes Documentaires (January 25, 1955), No.1973, pp.41-43 translated and reprinted in Allan B. Cole, editor, Conflict in Indo-China and International Repercussions: A Documentary History, 1945-1955 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956), pp.199-202.

French had provided. The Diem government now found its position considerably strengthened in relation to the sects. Thus it was a combination of American support and monetary inducements which helped Diem to split the sect ranks.¹³⁴ In January Nguyen Van Hue, Tran Van Soai's chief of staff, rallied to the State of Viet-Nam and promised to integrate a force of 3,500 men loyal to him into the Army. He was followed by another Hoa Hao officer, Major Nguyen Day, who brought with him 1,500 soldiers.¹³⁵ On February 13, two days after the French subsidies officially ended, a Cao Dai leader, Trinh Minh The, entered Saigon and proclaimed his support for the Diem government. He was followed ten days later by Nguyen Giac Ngo, a Hoa Hao leader.

Meanwhile Diem had been slowly preparing his next move in his quest to gain control over the entire governmental apparatus which he nominally headed. His target this time was the Binh Xuyen sect which controlled the police, security, gambling and vice operations in Saigon-Cholon.¹³⁶ Although the showdown came in late March it had been preceded by other events which made an armed clash highly likely. The head of the Binh Xuyen, Le Quang Vinh (Bay Vien)

¹³⁴ Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, op.cit., pp.245-246; Buttinger, A Dragon Embattled, op.cit., Vol.2, pp.1101-1107 and 1115; and William Henderson, "South Viet Nam Finds Itself", Foreign Affairs (January 1957), Vol.XXXV, No.1, pp.287-288.

¹³⁵ Buttinger, A Dragon Embattled, op.cit., Vol.2, p.867.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p.816; "The Exotic Mob", Time [Pacific Edition] (January 3, 1955), p.20; and Alfred W. McCoy, The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), pp.107-126. McCoy's work is especially valuable for its interview material with Binh Xuyen leaders and French officials.

had been conspiring openly since at least August to either bring down the Diem government or to "kick Diem upstairs" into a figurehead position. In late November a brief Army-Binh Xuyen clash foreshadowed the events of March as Diem deliberately attempted to undermine the Binh Xuyen's financial position.¹³⁷

In early 1955 Diem moved to close down the Binh Xuyen-operated brothels and to cancel their gambling concessions.¹³⁸ Then, in order to strengthen his military position in Saigon, Diem began to transfer units which were loyal to him from central Viet-Nam to Saigon, including Nung soldiers.¹³⁹ During the third week of February (1955) the Binh Xuyen attempted to counter this gambit by bringing together the various sect factions for discussions on united action. In attendance were Nguyen Thanh Phuong, Pham Cong Tac and Trinh Minh The of the Cao Dai and Tran Van Soai, Lam Thanh Nguyen and Ba Cut of the Hoa Hao. On March 3rd these men announced the formation of a united front, a mutual non-aggression pact and opposition to the Diem government (of which several of them were nominal Cabinet members). Pham Cong Tac, the spiritual head of the Cao Dai was named leader.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Radio France-Asie in English to Southeast Asia, 0945 GMT, December 1, 1954 carries a commentary by Richard Neville entitled, "Gen. Hinh's Dismissal"; and "Vietnam Soldiers Fight with Police", The New York Times (December 2, 1954), pp.1 and 4.

¹³⁸ "Voluntary Disinfection", Time (January 24, 1955), p.26.

¹³⁹ Donald Lancaster, The Emancipation of French Indochina (New York: Octagon Books, 1974), p.384; Buttinger, A Dragon Embattled, op.cit., Vol.2, p.870.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p.868; and Lancaster, The Emancipation of French Indochina, op.cit., p.383.

On March 21st the tri-sect united front issued an ultimatum to Diem calling on him to form a new government of national union and to carry out certain reforms.¹⁴¹ An intense five day period of negotiation followed in which both France and America became involved. Diem succeeded in getting Trinh Minh The to switch his loyalty and then prepared to attack. On March 28th he ordered Army units to dislodge the Binh Xuyen from the police and security headquarters buildings in Saigon. Fighting broke out on the evening of March 29th/30th. South Vietnam was about to be plunged into a period of domestic crisis and political instability.

IX. CONCLUSIONS

The Lao Dong Party, which led the eight-year war of resistance against the French and her indigenous allies, decided in July, 1954 to cease armed struggle as the method of achieving its objectives and to shift to political struggle. This decision was made in response to both external pressures and as a result of weighing domestic strengths and weaknesses. Externally, the DRVN found that her allies, Russia and China, were both moving towards a limited detente with the West and for reasons of their own wished to see an end to the First Indochinese war. Secondly, domestic opposition to the war operating inside

¹⁴¹ "Statement of the Presidium of the Front for the Unification of All National Forces", broadcast by Radio France-Asie in Vietnamese to Indochina, 1230 GMT, March 21, 1955.

France had created a favourable climate for striking an advantageous bargain. The PAVN victory at Dien Bien Phu was calculated to strike the French solar plexus and knock out her will to fight. Finally, the ever present threat of American military intervention hung over the Lao Dong Party leaders.

On the domestic scene the Party itself realised that it was not strong enough to win the complete independence they had been fighting for. Their forces and strength lay in the north, not the south. But having observed this, the Party also realised that it had certain assets: a well-organized political administration in the villages, a disciplined party and a popular program. The Party weighed the balances of forces and concluded that it was better to opt for a political settlement, secure half of the country and get the French out than to continue fighting. Therefore they signed agreements with the French at Geneva bringing to an end the First Indochina War.

In September, 1954 the Party held a major Political Bureau Conference where they took stock of the situation and decided on a long range Policy synchronised with the various deadlines and provisions in the Geneva Agreements. Since Viet-Nam was to be partitioned, Party policy would have to be adjusted to the peculiarities of each region. In the north the Party would fulfil its obligations during the period of French regroupment and withdrawal. A similar policy was to be pursued in the south; but new provisions had to be made for those personnel not slated

for final regroupment. The Party directed that those who remained must prepare for a situation in which the "enemy" would shortly become the administration. Party cadres were directed to reorganize and prepare to function covertly. Most mass organizations associated with the Lien Viet Front were either dissolved or reorganized.

By early 1955 leaders of the Viet-Nam Workers' Party could be reasonably satisfied with the implementation of the Geneva Agreements. A ceasefire had been effectively implemented, thus bringing peace to Viet-Nam. The anticipated American military intervention did not eventuate. Reorganization of the Party's apparatus in Nam Bo as well as the regroupment of military forces had been executed effectively. Within the space of two months the final military withdrawals from central Viet-Nam would be completed simultaneously with the withdrawal of French troops from the north.

The completion of the major military provisions of the Geneva Agreements (ICSC control and supervision of military personnel and equipment would continue) signalled a shift in attention to political matters. High on the Party's list of priorities was the North-South consultative talks to determine the modalities of the elections. The current political instability in the south was no doubt foreseen by Party leaders. They probably felt that Diem would fall leaving in his wake a succession of weak governments. Perhaps a group of pro-DRVN politicians

would take office and smooth the process of unification.¹⁴²
 If not, then perhaps France would have to play a stronger role. Either way the Party stood to benefit.

However there were some dark clouds on the horizon. American influence in the south was growing rapidly. Aid was now channelled to the State of Viet-Nam by-passing the French. On November 17, 1954 J. Lawton Collins, a special representative of U.S. President Eisenhower with the rank of ambassador announced at a Saigon press conference that "an American mission will soon take charge of instructing the Vietnam Army in accordance with special American methods which have proved effective in Korea, Greece, Turkey and other parts of the world".¹⁴³ Although the State of Viet-Nam was not a signatory to the Manila Pact (SEATO Treaty), it had been placed under SEATO's protective umbrella in a separate protocol.¹⁴⁴ The growth

¹⁴² There were a variety of Vietnamese politicians in exile in Paris, most notably Buu Hoi, who might have replaced Diem in 1954-55. Hoi was on record as favouring a rapprochement with the DRVN; see: United Press dispatch from Saigon in Le Monde (August 18, 1954), p.12; Devillers and Lacouture, End of a War, op.cit., p.364, footnote 5; and "The U.S. and France's Withdrawal From Vietnam, 1954-1956", in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 1, IV.A.3., p.15.

¹⁴³ Dispatch from Saigon in The New York Times (November 18, 1954), p.3; for a general overview of this period see: Geoffrey Warner, "The United States, France and Vietnam in the Year After Geneva", paper presented to a seminar of the Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University (September 20, 1972).

¹⁴⁴ The Protocol states: "The Parties to the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty unanimously designate for the purposes of Article IV of the Treaty the States of Cambodia and Laos and the free territory under the jurisdiction of the State of Vietnam". The Protocol and the Treaty, including article IV, may be found in Eisenhower, Mandate for Change, op.cit., pp.708-711.

in American influence was at the expense of France whom the DRVN leaders held responsible for implementing the Geneva Agreements.

CHAPTER 3

POLITICAL STRUGGLE UNDER THE GENEVA AGREEMENTS (March - August 1955)

I. INTRODUCTION

Sometime during the month of March the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party held its Seventh Plenum. Very little is known of this meeting, including the precise dates it was held. It is known, however, that the Fourth Session of the DRVN National Assembly was convened during March 20-26. It seems probable that the Central Committee met just before the National Assembly convened. Summaries of the speeches given to the National Assembly by Pham Van Dong and Vo Nguyen Giap were publicly broadcast and from this information and other sources it is possible to discern Lao Dong Party policy at this stage. Before doing so two significant events should be highlighted.

First, by March 1955 final military regroupment north of the seventeenth parallel had been carried out in all provisional assembly areas except for Binh Dinh and Quang Ngai. In December, 1954 a press report indicated that four top southern revolutionary leaders had also regrouped and were given important posts in the DRVN government.¹ In late February, the PAVN High Command gave a tea party for the Nam Bo units which had regrouped. The published list of

¹ Pham Van Bach, the former chairman of the Nam Bo Committee of Administration and Resistance, became Assistant Secretary of the Interior; Ung Van Khiem became Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs; Pham Ngoc Thach became Assistant Secretary of Health; and Nguyen Duy Trinh became Assistant Secretary in the Premier's Office; see: "Reds Widen Cabinet Base", The New York Times (December 31, 1954), p.4.

quests present indicated that even more southern leaders were in the north. Of the eight original members of the Central Committee Directorate for Southern Viet-Nam six were now in the north: Le Duc Tho, Pham Hung, Ung Van Khiem, Duong Quoc Chinh, Pham Ngoc Thuan and Thuong Vu.² The fact that their presence was reported in the north soon after the final PAVN regroupment from Ca Mau might be seen as confirmation that the Directorate had been located in that region. From the above information it seems safe to conclude that the Directorate was deactivated at this time.

The second significant event to occur between the September Political Bureau Conference and the 7th Party Plenum was the convening in January (7th-11th) of a National Congress of the Lien Viet Front. This was the largest Congress since 1951 when the Viet Minh Front merged with the Lien Viet Front. There can be no doubt as to the purpose of this Congress, for one theme runs through the major reports and speeches delivered there. Typical was an editorial in the Party paper, Nhan Dan, which appeared on the first day:

Today, confronted by the new situation, the Lien Viet National Committee decided to meet in order to review what has been done, the policy written, the program of the Front, acknowledge the new situation, the new missions, and deals with the very important problem of widening and strengthening the National United Front, so as to unite and consolidate the forces of the people in order to struggle for peace, independence, and the democratization of the country.³

² Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0525 GMT, February 20, 1955; Le Duan remained in the south to head the Nam Bo Regional Committee. The whereabouts of Ha Huy Giap went unreported but he later appeared in the north.

³ "Let Us Acclaim the National Congress of the Lien Viet Front", Nhan Dan (January 7, 1955) broadcast by Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0430 GMT, January 7, 1955.

The final communique reflected the fact that enlarging the Front had top priority. Point one concluded: "...the National United Front must still extend and strengthen itself. Therefore it must issue new regulations better fitting the present situation..."⁴ The remainder of the communique made these points: (1) the Front is to be based on the worker-peasant alliance; (2) the aims are to struggle for peace, unification, independence and democracy (that is, for North-South consultations); (3) no discrimination will be exercised in membership on the basis of sex, nationality, religion or political tendency as long as the person or group fully supports "peace, unification, independence and democracy" for Viet-Nam ; (4) the solidarity of the Front is based on these principles: democracy, unity, respect for the autonomy of member groups and mutual help, and (5) that in order to form a new Front on the basis of the above points, a national assembly composed of all the classes, parties, groups, religions in the north and south, should be called. Toward this end an organizing committee was set up.

A special "Message...to the compatriots of the South" was issued which recognized the possibility that Viet-Nam might remain permanently divided unless the people in both zones united to strengthen the National United Front to "struggle for the coming general elections..."⁵

⁴ "Communique of the Resolutions of the Conference of the Lien Viet National Committee", Voice of Vietnam, 1100 GMT, January 20, 1955.

⁵ "Message Sent by the National Conference of the Delegates of the Lien Viet to the Compatriots of the South", Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 1000 GMT, January 17, 1955.

As usual, an editorial in Nhan Dan spelled out for Party members the significance of the Congress and its communique. It is worth quoting the editorial at some length for a full appreciation of developments:

The conference passed an important resolution conforming with the desire of our people to widen and consolidate the National United Front to safeguard peace, achieve unity, perfect the independence and democratize the country.

We must recognize that our Front at the present time is a national united front including all of the country, that it struggles for peace, independence, unification and democratization of Vietnam based on the alliance of workers and farmers under the leadership of the Party.

The Front must follow a strong policy not only in the free areas but also among all the people's classes of the cities and newly liberated regions of the plain.

This policy must be applied not only in North Vietnam but also in South Vietnam.

During the application of the National United Front it is necessary to hold firmly to the principles of unification in our essential activities. This is very important. If we do not act exactly thus we might fall into error, either of the right or on the left.

We must know how to change the policy of the Party to consolidate the front in order to make the greatest expansion.

All the cadres of the Party, the Government and the Front must study the decisions made by the recent conference of the representatives of the Lien Viet Front and endeavour to apply them faithfully.

At present there is also - in some regions - a great number of cadres who are neglecting the main lines of the Lien Viet National Front, who do not study the policy of the front, and who do not favor adhering to this front. Several errors have been committed regarding the application of the principles of the front. This causes serious prejudice to the unification of the people and relations between the Party and the people.

The conference of the representatives of the Lien Viet Front had decided this year to take steps to

convene a congress of the entire country to include all the representatives who have not yet participated in the Lien Viet [Front] in the south as well as the north - in order to discuss the formation of a national front coherently widened to group all the democratic forces of the people with a view towards the intensification of the struggle against the American imperialists, against the French colonialist elements - saboteurs of the armistice agreements - and against the Ngo Dinh Diem band, to consolidate peace, achieve unification, independence and democracy in the country...⁶

These two events, the deactivation of the Central Committee Directorate for Southern Viet-Nam and the call for a national congress to revitalize the Lien Viet Front, provide the necessary backdrop to the 7th Plenum. Political developments in the south, sketched in chapter two, should also be borne in mind.

II. THE SEVENTH PLENUM (March 1955)

An official chronology of this period stated that the 7th plenum of the Central Committee had set forth the following tasks:

- continue to implement the Geneva Agreements and fight for their strict observance by other parties,
- consolidate the North in all respects,
- keep up and step up political movement of the South Vietnamese people,
- broaden and strengthen the National United Front throughout the country,

⁶ "To Achieve Systematically the Resolutions Made by the Conference of the Representatives of the Lien Viet National Front", Nhan Dan (January 22, 1955) broadcast by Vietnam News Agency in Vietnamese morse to Vietnam, 0435 GMT, January 22, 1955.

- intensify diplomatic activities and enlist the support and sympathy of the world's peoples.⁷

It was at this time that the full range of problems encountered in trying to establish a DRVN administration in the north began to mount, thus draining the energy and resources which might have been used in dealing with southern problems. In other words, the Lao Dong Party was preoccupied with two major problems north of the seventeenth parallel: security, and economic self-sufficiency. The massive movement of refugees to the south brought with it mixed blessings: on the one hand it freed the north of potential dissidents, it decreased the number of mouths to feed and it made available more land for the landless. On the other hand, the massive flow of people to the south carried with it certain security problems, it disrupted agricultural production, it depleted the DRVN of certain skilled manpower and it caused grave embarrassment internationally. Security problems were troublesome and suppression of minor guerrilla activities required a diversion of resources. Enemy psychological warfare activities caused concern.⁸

⁷ "Socialist Construction and Anti-US Resistance: Chronology of Events (1954-1970)", Vietnam Courier [Hanoi] (August 10, 1970), No.281, p.4.

⁸ The American "Saigon Military Mission" under the direction of Edward Lansdale was involved in training and infiltrating several guerrilla bands for operations in North Viet-Nam; they also conducted psychological warfare against the DRVN authorities. These exploits are discussed in the report of the Saigon Military Mission in "Lansdale Team's Report on Covert Saigon Mission in '54 and '55", in Neil Sheehan, compiler, The Pentagon Papers as Published by The New York Times (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), Document No.15, pp.53-66. Murti, Vietnam Divided, op.cit., pp.23-24, recounts details of a clash between Tai Chin Quy, a pro-

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Therefore, on the eve of final withdrawals, the French from the north and the PAVN from the south, there was some doubt as to the Lao Dong Party's ability to meet all the crisis points at once, and successfully.

The Nhan Dan editorial cited above, mentioned the problem of cadres who did not apply the main lines of Lien Viet Front policy properly. Ho Chi Minh was quite precise on this problem. In his opening speech to the 7th plenum he listed four major goals which the Party, Army and people had to carry out:

1. Continue to rigorously apply the Geneva Agreements, to consolidate peace, and to continue to struggle in order to realize unification of the country by free elections,
2. Consolidate the north from all points of view and, at the same time, maintain and energetically develop our work in the south,
3. Consolidate and enlarge the basis of the Unified National Front throughout the country,

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French partisan leader, who refused to disarm or regroup following the withdrawal of the French Union Forces from his area. Voice of Free Vietnam in Vietnamese to Indochina, 1100 GMT, January 17, 1955 describes a clash between PAVN units and Nung [an ethnic minority group] troops. According to Geoffrey Warner, "General de Brebisson strongly denied charges that France maintained and supplied partisans in North Vietnam after Geneva. They had maintained and supplied Thai and Meo bands on the Chinese border before the armistice, but the few French officers and non-coms operating with them had all been killed and the bands themselves, which are very small, had slipped across the border into China..." in "Interview with General Michel de Brebisson", op.cit., p.1. Nevertheless contemporary reports suggest both French and American involvement in aiding disturbances in the north; see: "Vietnam Truce Unit Criticizes French", The New York Times (February 11, 1955), p.6; Radio France-Asie in French, 0445 GMT, April 26, 1955; Voice of Vietnam in French to Southeast Asia, 1030 GMT, April 23, 1955; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0615 GMT, June 17, 1955; 0703 GMT, July 5, 1955; 0749 GMT, July 20, 1955; 0805 GMT, August 22, 1955; and People's Radio, Revolutionary Committee, Saigon, in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 1330 GMT, September 27, 1955.

4. Perfect the direction, complete the instruction of the members of the Central Committee, perfect the organization and the methods of work, raise the spirit of organization and of discipline, and perfect the revolutionary education of all officers and members of the Party.⁹

On March 20 Pham Van Dong delivered a report to the 4th Session of the DRVN National Assembly in which he dealt at length with the "present situation and tasks". This speech was the most comprehensive policy statement to be officially released by the DRVN government to date. DRVN news media gave it extensive coverage.

Since Dong was both a Vice Premier and Political Bureau member it is reasonable to conclude that not only was the speech obviously authoritative but it probably reflected the views of the recent Party Plenum.

Pham Van Dong dealt with three policy areas: the international scene, problems of economic recovery in the north and the development of a broader national united front for both zones.

Dong's analysis of the world situation repeated the major tenets of the September Politbureau resolution: (1) the front of peace led by the USSR is clearly stronger than the front of the imperialists, and (2) the front of peace is growing stronger each day.¹⁰ In discussing the

⁹ "President Ho Chi Minh's Speech at Opening Meeting of the Seventh Session of the General Executive Committee of the Labor Party of Viet-Nam", Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 1200 GMT, April 29, 1955.

¹⁰ Pham Van Dong's speech was transcribed in four parts: (1) Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0600 GMT, March 23, 1955 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (March 24, 1955), No.58, pp.CCC5-CCC10; (2) Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0001 GMT, March 22, 1955 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (March 25, 1955), No.59, pp.CCC1-CCC15;

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role of the DRVN in this "front of peace", Dong related his analysis of the world situation to the Southeast Asian region. Here he focused on SEATO, and American attempts to oust the French so as to convert Viet-Nam into an American colony. SEATO was seen as a possible springboard for an attack on China. The aim of American policy was: "to prejudice the re-establishment of normal relations between the north and south..."¹¹ In other words, despite the trend favouring peace in the world, tensions in Southeast Asia were emerging which carried the potential to disrupt the larger, more favourable peace forces. Therefore, concluded Dong, "The present enemies of our people are the American imperialists, the French colonialists, saboteurs of the agreements, and their lackeys, the Ngo Dinh Diem band".¹²

Dong went on to develop his analysis into a statement of foreign policy goals which he said formed the external policy of the DRVN. Firstly, the DRVN would further strengthen friendly relations with the People's Republic of China, the USSR and the people's democracies. Secondly, he stated with respect to Laos and Cambodia, the DRVN "is ready to establish normal relations...on the basis of the five principles contained in the Sino-Indian and Sino-Burmese joint declarations".¹³ Thirdly, Dong acclaimed the forthcoming

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(3) Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0001 GMT, March 22, 1955 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (March 28, 1955), No.60, pp.CCC1-CCC6; and (4) Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0001 GMT, March 22, 1955 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (March 29, 1955), No.61, pp.CCC1-CCC7. Cited hereafter as Dong Speech Part I, II, III and IV, respectively.

¹¹ Dong Speech, Part II, p.CCC12.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Dong Speech, Part IV, p.CCC5.

Afro-Asian Conference to be held at Bandung in Indonesia. Fourthly, with regard to France, which shared with the DRVN the responsibility for implementing the Geneva Accords, in the DRVN view, Dong stated:

The relations between the two countries are indispensable to maintain and strengthen peace. The government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is preoccupied with maintaining economic and cultural relations with France on the principle of equality and community of reciprocal interests.¹⁴

Dong concluded this list by indicating the DRVN's support for Russia's stand on disarmament and the banning of atomic weapons, and the DRVN's opposition to the U.S. occupation of Formosa and the rearmament of West Germany.

The most significant portion of Dong's report was his analysis of developments in the north. Dong stressed several times that the mobilization of the masses for the reduction of land rent and the application of the agrarian reform was considered the foundation of all reconstruction policy. Two brief excerpts from his speech will illustrate this point:

The essential mission of the Vietnamese revolution is the total abolition of the regime of appropriation of lands and rice fields, of spoliation and exploitation of the peasants by the feudal landowner class.¹⁵

and

As regards North Vietnam, the agrarian reform constitutes the essential basis of national recovery on the political, economic, cultural and social planes.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ibid., p.CCC6. The DRVN government had been dealing with a French mission headed by Jean Sainteny; see: Warner, "The United States, France and Vietnam", op.cit., pp.14-20.

¹⁵ Dong Speech, Part III, p.CCC3.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.CCC4.

Elsewhere in his report Dong discussed the enormous agricultural problems confronting the DRVN leaders as they tried to rebuild their war damaged economy. Dong mentioned, in particular, the destroyed irrigation, communication and transport systems which forced the Party "to make exceptional efforts to surmount the difficulties from the viewpoint of the supply of rice and that of financial purification".¹⁷ In light of these problems it seems that the Central Committee, as reflected in Pham Van Dong's report, made a decision to accord first priority to consolidating the north over the carrying out of the political struggle in the south. The priorities were justified in this way:

In order to win victory in the struggle for peace, unity, independence and democracy, we must depend on the people's power in the south as in the north. The north becomes the basis of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. To strengthen the north is to strengthen the principal bases [sic] which will decide the victory of the present struggle for national liberation, the foundation of which is the struggle to strengthen peace and national unification.

To strengthen the north we must do everything necessary on the political, economic, cultural and military planes. It is a question of developing the application of the agrarian reform and realizing the economic and cultural recovery, in order to improve the material and moral conditions of the people, to progressively make the country advance toward industrialization; in order to strengthen the national defense, to defend peace and the Fatherland, to strengthen the Government of the Democratic Republic and to give significance to all its diplomatic actions.

In so doing we will strengthen the north, but we must also pay attention to the south and take into consideration the aspirations of the

¹⁷ Dong Speech, Part II, p.CCC9.

compatriots of the south, so that they may understand the necessity of positively participating with full confidence in the common struggle of all our people.¹⁸

In order to undertake mass mobilization for rent reduction and to carry out agrarian reform "a single and central direction" was necessary. The Party, according to Dong, must enhance its discipline and authority over "the cadres charged with internal and external policy".¹⁹

Dong continued:

Our power must be consolidated and widened in order to make it a vast National United Front. The rural powers must be reorganized, with the agrarian reform as the basis.²⁰

Party policy in the south, stated Dong, would be based on the strict implementation of the Geneva Agreements "which aim at consolidating peace, unifying the country, and perfecting independence and democrac[y]".²¹ Therefore the struggle in the south to achieve these aims [peace, unity, independence, democracy] must be co-ordinated with the struggle in the north.²²

As in the north, the basis of the Party's power in the south would be a national united front. Its policies would be directed at creating "a large movement in favour of peace and unity, free general elections, a political conference between the governments of the two zones, the re-establishment of normal relations between the north and south and in

¹⁸ Dong Speech, Part III, p.CCC2.

¹⁹ Dong Speech, Part IV, p.CCC4.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Dong Speech, Part III, p.CCC1.

²² Ibid., p.CCC2.

favour of the plans of the National Assembly and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam concerning these problems".²³

Dong ended his report with a brief reference to the Party: "To enlarge increasingly the National United Front we must first consolidate and extend the direction of the Vietnam Workers' Party [the Lao Dong Party]...".²⁴

General Vo Nguyen Giap also delivered a report to the National Assembly and it too received wide publicity. Its scope was much narrower than Pham Van Dong's report but it nevertheless contained some significant revelations about Lao Dong Party policy at this juncture. Giap, like Dong, was also a full member of the Political Bureau and it is reasonable to assume his words were an accurate reflection of Central Committee thinking.

Gen. Giap addressed himself to a review of the implementation of the Geneva Agreements over the past eight months, and to the likely developments in the future. According to Giap the Geneva Agreements constituted a "great victory" for the people of Viet-Nam because the international community recognized the "sovereignty, independence and territorial unity" of Viet-Nam. The agreements ended the war, provided a set timetable for the withdrawal of the French, and made provision for a political settlement by means of general elections to be held in 1956.²⁵

²³ Dong Speech, Part II, p.CCC14.

²⁴ Dong Speech, Part IV, p.CCC6.

²⁵ General Vo Nguyen Giap's speech to the DRVN National Assembly, broadcast by Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 1300 GMT, March 23, 1955, was transcribed

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Giap's second point was that the main military provisions had been carried out satisfactorily: [d]uring the last eight months we have always correctly and strictly applied all clauses of the Geneva accords: the adversary, on his side, has also respected certain of these clauses".²⁶ Among the points of contention, according to Gen. Giap, was the question of prisoners who were still held by the other side.²⁷

Far more serious were the efforts of the American imperialists to violate the Geneva Agreements. Giap specifically mentioned SEATO and its extension of protection to Indochina as a "cynical violation" which threatened the "security and peace in Southeast Asia".²⁸ The Americans, Giap argued, were preparing for a war with China.

The French were guilty of collusion with the Americans. Here Giap cited as examples the Ely-Collins cooperation in Saigon, meetings of officials of both countries, and France's participation in SEATO.

Certain articles of the Geneva Agreements protecting individuals against reprisal and guaranteeing their democratic liberties were being violated according to Giap. He accused the Diem regime of conducting a policy of terrorism against former Resistance veterans. According to his figures, "since

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in two parts: (1) U.S. FBIS Daily Report (March 29, 1955), No.61, pp.CCC13-CCC16 and (2) U.S. FBIS Daily Report (March 30, 1955), No.62, pp.CCC1-CCC17. Cited hereafter as Giap Speech Part I and II, respectively. The quotation is from Giap Speech, Part I, p.CCC14.

²⁶ Giap Speech, Part II, p.CCC3.

²⁷ Giap Speech, Part I, p.CCC2.

²⁸ Giap Speech, Part II, p.CCC5.

the cease-fire up to Jan.31, 1955, the adversary committed 2,321 acts of terrorism and massacres".²⁹

Gen. Giap then turned his attention to the north and explained what had happened there. He concentrated his remarks on discussing the refugee flow to the south and the problem of security. Regarding refugees, Giap states that they were both tricked and forced to regroup to the south, where they would become either soldiers in Diem's army or "coolies on the rubber plantations".

Giap then exposed the activities of "reactionaries in the service of the Diem government" who used propaganda to distort "the spirit of our policy" and who sowed panic among Catholic compatriots. Giap listed the following slogans as examples of false propaganda:³⁰

God has gone to the south.
 Catholics will be excommunicated if they
 stay in the north.
 Those who go to the south will be given
 ricefields, buffaloes, and will lead a
 happy life.
 Those who stay in the north will be exterminated
 by American atomic bombs.

Gen. Giap concluded this section by stating what had become a keystone of DRVN policy: even though the Americans have replaced the French militarily and politically, it was "[t]he French authorities who were signatories to these accords and [who] are also responsible for it".³¹

Gen. Giap's conclusions reiterated previous policy and added some new features. First, developments in Cambodia and

²⁹ Ibid., p.CCC8.

³⁰ Ibid., p.9; Faber, Rot Leuchtet der Song Cai, op.cit., pp.177-182.

³¹ Ibid., p.CCC11.

Laos were linked to developments in Viet-Nam. That is, the implementation of the Geneva Agreements there would create "a solid base" for the opening of favourable relations among the three nations of Indochina. Secondly, DRVN policy towards the Agreements remained unchanged: "We are continuing to respect and apply the signed agreements; we are resolved to struggle to demand that the adversary respect and apply the agreements".³² Thirdly, "struggle" against the saboteurs of the Geneva Agreements is the only solution Giap offered as to what the DRVN reaction would be if America and the Diem government continued to violate the Agreements.

Lao Dong Party statements were never clear on this point, and in this instance Gen. Giap proved no exception:

With the struggle in favor of the application of the agreements, the struggle for the consolidation of peace and the development of unity remains intimately bound. The general elections will only take place when peace is consolidated. The struggle for the carrying out of unity will contribute largely to the consolidation of peace.³³

In the final section of his report Gen. Giap stressed the use of the "legal" status of the Geneva Agreements as a base on which to launch this struggle. He claimed that for the political struggle movement to be successful the people must first be educated in how to denounce violations. Secondly, a broad front consisting of the supporters of peace, unity, independence and democracy must be formed. Thirdly, PAVN must continue to respect the Agreements by regrouping the remaining troops in Binh Dinh - Quang Ngai provinces. Fourthly, the clauses of the agreement relating

³² Ibid., p.CCC15.

³³ Ibid.

freedom of movement should be respected. ("Those who want to go should go; those who want to stay, should stay").³⁴ Fifthly, the struggle movement should protest coercive measures, restrictions of movement, acts of terrorism, distinctions in the treatment of people based on political belief and violation of democratic freedoms. Finally, Giap stated:

We must prepare to negotiate with the adversary with regard to the general elections. To favor these negotiations our Government and the compatriots of the two zones must join their efforts in order to re-establish and increase economic, cultural and social relations.³⁵

Although official Party histories provide no further details as to the decisions taken at the 7th Plenum, the speeches by Pham Van Dong and Vo Nguyen Giap can be taken as accurate reflections of Party thinking. We have seen earlier how the Party hoped to integrate policy on three levels (on the international scene, in the north and in the south), to achieve maximum impact. The 7th Plenum met just before the final regroupment of military forces. Gen. Giap reported in his speech that the regroupment would be carried out as far as the PAVN was concerned. This event, then, marks the divide between the two-step process of implementing the Geneva Agreements; step one was focused on military details while step two would be concerned with political affairs. Partition was to occur in May and be followed in July, supposedly, by consultations between the "competent authorities" in the two zones.

³⁴ Ibid., p.CCC16.

³⁵ Ibid., p.CCC17.

Lao Dong Party policy at this point continued to reflect the long-range assessment drafted in September. It also addressed itself to some new tasks, two features of which are striking: the DRVN was going to start a "diplomatic offensive" among its allies and neighbours and secondly, agrarian reform was going to be given top priority in the north. The south was to rely on its own resources developing the clandestine network of Party members and in carrying out a political struggle movement emphasizing slogans related to the implementation of the Geneva Agreements (namely, a call for consultations, a call for normalization of relations and protest at reprisals, terrorism and violations of democratic freedom). In March of 1955 at the time of the 7th Plenum there was still no reason to believe that any other policy would yield better results. In fact, the south was on the verge of anarchy as no real efforts had yet been undertaken by the State of Viet-Nam authorities to destroy the clandestine organization of the Lao Dong Party. Overall, the situation looked favourable.

III. FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVES

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to deal systematically with the foreign policies of the Lao Dong Party in the post-Geneva period. To do so would involve a consideration of the relationship of the DRVN with three different constellations of countries: (1) the fraternal socialist allies, (2) the Geneva Conference participants and ICC representatives, and (3) with Asian neighbours (Laos, Cambodia, Burma, Indonesia). However, at this point in the narrative it is imperative to discuss three foreign policy

events: (1) the DRVN's attendance at Bandung, (2) the DRVN's attempts to open consultations with the authorities in the south and (3) the trip abroad to China and Russia by a DRVN government delegation headed by President Ho Chi Minh.

In chapter two the desire on the part of the Lao Dong Party leaders to secure a national territory, complete with port and capital, was mentioned. In the post-Geneva period the DRVN came into being at least as a "state" accorded de facto recognition. As a member of the "front of peace" the DRVN soon exchanged diplomatic representatives with a majority of socialist nations. Beginning in October the following embassies were established in Hanoi: People's Republic of China (PRC), USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Mongolia, North Korea, Rumania, and Bulgaria. Coincidentally with this, a series of trade and other agreements were signed and various cultural-educational-political groups were exchanged.

Both Nehru and U Nu paid courtesy calls to Hanoi en route to the PRC. In November 1954 a group of Indonesian diplomats spent a week touring the DRVN. This new status on the world diplomatic stage soon resulted in invitations to visit abroad.

The Bandung Conference provided the DRVN with an opportunity to make its foreign policy known and to secure support for its interpretations as to how the Geneva Agreements should be implemented. The DRVN delegation which was led by Pham Van Dong, stopped in India and Burma en route.

Dong's stay in India was marked by the release of a joint communique which stressed the "importance of free elections and the achievement of unity of Viet-Nam as provided for by the Geneva Agreements", as "an important contribution, not only to unity and peace in Viet-Nam, but also in Indo-China as a whole and in Southeast Asia".³⁶ The DRVN's reception at Bandung was a marked success. According to SarDesai:

At the Bandung Conference, Nehru had largely ignored the delegation from South Vietnam, whereas the DRV delegation, led by Pham Van Dong, had received sympathetic attention from the conference's sponsors, the Colombo powers, particularly India. The conference had passed a resolution recommending the admission of several countries, among them Laos, Cambodia and a 'unified Vietnam', to the United Nations.³⁷

The high point of the Conference, from the DRVN's point of view, came when Nehru and Chou En-lai "sponsored" a joint declaration by the Royal Lao Government (RLG) and the DRVN. The State of Viet-Nam officials refused to take part, thus increasing their diplomatic isolation. Laos and the DRVN agreed to establish harmonious and good-neighbourly relations on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence. The DRVN stated that a political settlement between the RLG and Pathet Lao was the internal affair of Laos.³⁸ This latter point harked back to the

³⁶ "The Text of the Joint Communique by the Prime Minister of India and Shri Pham Van Dong Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam in New Delhi on April 10, 1955", in Foreign Policy of India: Texts of Documents, 1947-1959 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1959), pp.169-170.

³⁷ SarDesai, Indian Foreign Policy, op.cit., p.89.

³⁸ Ibid., pp.70-72 and 88.

Nehru-Dong joint statement in which the DRVN first accepted the five principles of peaceful coexistence.

The DRVN made several attempts prior to the 7th Plenum to open normal relations with the south. For example, on January 28, 1955 the DRVN Postal and Telegraphic Service addressed a memorandum to its counterpart in the south suggesting they reach agreement by March 1st on details which would allow the exchange of postal cards between the two zones. After a month's wait with no reply, the DRVN Postal and Telegraphic Service sent a second memorandum to its counterpart suggesting the same exchange as before, and recalling its original memorandum. This time a reply was received and the two services hammered out an agreement in April which permitted, as of May 15, 1955, the exchange of family postal cards.³⁹

As we have seen, Vo Nguyen Giap raised the issue of joint north-south negotiations and the issues of general elections and normalization of economic-cultural and social relations in his report to the 4th Session of the DRVN National Assembly. This was not the first time the issue of normalization had been raised. Pham Van Bach, the DRVN Deputy Minister of the Interior was reported to have called for the normalization of relations as early as February 6th 1955.⁴⁰

After the seventh Plenum this theme was given increasing emphasis, especially as the July 20, 1955 date for the

³⁹ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1400 GMT, March 6, 1955; and 0750 GMT, May 21, 1955.

⁴⁰ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0430 GMT, February 8, 1955.

commencement of consultations approached. During the month of May, for example, there were at least three reports in the official DRVN media raising the normalization issue.⁴¹ Thus it came as no surprise when, on June 6, 1955, Pham Van Dong undertook a major initiative on this matter. After pointing out that the 300-day period for military regroupment had ended, Dong said the time had arrived to implement the political provisions. He therefore issued the following invitation to the State of Viet-Nam:

The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam declares its readiness to hold the consultative conference with the competent representative authorities in South Vietnam for [sic] July 20, 1955 onwards in order to discuss the organization of free general elections throughout the country in July 1956.⁴²

A reply was forthcoming on July 16, 1955. Ngo Dinh Diem with full U.S. backing answered:

We did not sign the Geneva Agreements. We are not bound in any way by these agreements, signed against the will of the Vietnamese people.⁴³

Diem went on to state that his government did "not reject the principle of free elections" but that they could only be meaningful if they were "absolutely free". Diem

⁴¹ The DRVN Council of Ministers on May 15, 1955; Ta Quang Buu, at a Hanoi press conference on May 16, 1955; and by Vietnam News Agency on May 21, 1955.

⁴² Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0600 and 0715 GMT, June 6, 1955 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (June 7, 1955), No.110, pp.CCC1-CCC5.

⁴³ "Premier Diem States Policies Regarding Country-Wide Elections (July 16, 1955)", Embassy of Vietnam (Washington, D.C.), Press and Information Service, press release (July 22, 1955), Vol.1, No.18 reprinted in Cole, Conflict in Indochina, op.cit., pp.226-227.

continued:

Faced now with a regime of oppression as practised by the Viet Minh, we remain skeptical concerning the possibility of fulfilling the conditions of free elections in the North. We shall not miss any opportunity which would permit the unification of our homeland in freedom, but it is out of the question for us to consider any proposal from the Viet Minh if proof is not given that they put the superior interests of the National Community above those of communism...⁴⁴

Diem's reply was perfectly timed to catch the attention of world leaders for it was issued on the eve of another Big Four Conference in Geneva. Although Indochina was not on the agenda it must certainly have been in the minds of some of those present for on July 20th a government (i.e. State of Viet-Nam)-organized mob ransacked two Saigon hotels which housed ICC members. Thereafter the Indochina question was raised in private conversation. Diem's reply was also issued after Nehru (whose country was chairman of the ICC), had signed two joint statements which specifically referred to elections. The first was a joint declaration reached with Bulganin on June 23rd. It stated:

In particular they [Bulganin-Nehru] would strongly urge that where elections are to be held as a preliminary to a political settlement the efforts of the Governments concerned should be directed to the full implementation of the provisions of the agreements.⁴⁵

The second document was a joint statement agreed to between the Indian and Polish governments. It stated:

It is essential for the sake of peace not only in Indo-China but in the Far East generally and the world that the Geneva agreements should

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ "The Text of the Joint Declaration by Marshall Bulganin and Shri Nehru Issued in Moscow on June 23, 1955", in Foreign Policy of India, op.cit., pp.185-187.

be fully implemented by the parties concerned and the elections held as provided for therein.⁴⁶

Faced with this situation on July 19th, the eve of the deadline set for consultations, the DRVN issued another call for north-south talks:

The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam proposes that you appoint your representatives and that they and ours hold the consultative conference from July 20, 1955 onwards as provided for by the Geneva Agreements at a place agreeable to both sides on Vietnamese territory in order to discuss the problem of unification of our country by means of free, general elections all over Vietnam.⁴⁷

At this point it is necessary to retrace our steps and consider briefly the third foreign policy event of this period: Ho Chi Minh's trip to China and Russia. It was obviously timed to precede the Big Four Conference and perhaps influence its deliberations. For this reason one may conclude that Ho Chi Minh was after Chinese and Russian backing of the DRVN call for consultations.⁴⁸ Ho's itinerary took him to China first (June 27 to July 7), to Mongolia and to Russia (July 12-18). The composition of the delegation clearly revealed that Ho was also seeking reconstruction aid.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ "The Text of the Joint Statement By the Prime Ministers of India and Poland Issued in Warsaw on June 27, 1955", *ibid.*, pp.191-192.

⁴⁷ Vietnam News Agency in English Morse to Southeast Asia, 0602 GMT, July 20, 1955 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (July 21, 1955), No.141, pp.CCC1-CCC3.

⁴⁸ Hong Kong dispatch in The New York Times (June 27, 1955), p.7.

⁴⁹ The DRVN government delegation was composed of: Ho Chi Minh, President and Premier; Truong Chinh, Secretary-General of the VWP; Le Van Hien, Minister of Finance; Phan Anh, Minister of Industry and Commerce; Nguyen Van Huyen, Minister of Education; Nghiem Xuan Yem, Minister of Agriculture and

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In evaluating Ho's trip one must be careful to place it in the context of the times. In later years (particularly in the 1960's) Viet-Nam became the focal point of socialist bloc unity, but in 1955 the situation was much different as Cameron reminds us:

If the Soviet Union was displaying less than total enthusiasm for the character of the DRV as a Socialist state and for the problem of reunification, the North Vietnamese [i.e. DRVN] themselves were obviously less than enthusiastic about establishing the closest of all possible ties with the Soviet Union. Relations were, of course, correct, but the North Vietnamese chose to show their displeasure, or distrust, of the Soviets by maintaining relations on a formal government-to-government basis while de-emphasizing party ties. That policy was clearly demonstrated during July and August 1955 when a high level DRV delegation visited both China and the Soviet Union. Although headed by Ho Chi Minh and including Truong Chinh, then General Secretary of the VWP, the delegation was carefully described by the Vietnamese as well as by the Chinese and Russians as 'the Government delegation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam'. The visits were correct in form, but the Soviet reception for Ho Chi Minh did not compare in the warmth to that accorded to Prime Minister Nehru of India during his visit in June. The joint communiques issued in Peking and Moscow at the conclusion of the visits made no mention of party relations. Neither communique indicated that the Vietnamese had won staunch support from these Communist brothers on the issue of reunification, but differences in wording indicated that there was somewhat more success in Peking than in Moscow.⁵⁰

Ho Chi Minh's trip, almost as if by way of compensation, was a great success in terms of the amount of aid he

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Forestry; Ung Van Khiem, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs; Nguyen Duy Trinh, director of the Presidential House; Pham Ngoc Thach, Deputy Minister of Public Health; Hoang Van Hoan, DRVN Ambassador to China; and Nguyen Luong Bang, DRVN Ambassador to the USSR.

⁵⁰ Allan W. Cameron, "The Soviet Union and Vietnam: The Origins of Involvement", in W. Raymond Duncan, editor, Soviet Policy in Developing Countries (Waltham, Massachusetts: Ginn-Blaisdell, 1970), p.200.

received - aid vitally necessary for Viet-Nam's recovery and later planned industrialization.⁵¹ In China the DRVN delegation received news of a grant of 800 million Chinese yuan (US\$200,000,000) to be applied towards the repair of damaged roads (Nam Quan to Hanoi and Lai Chau to Haiphong), bridges, railway lines (Lao Ky to Hanoi), airfields and the reconstruction of some eighteen projects including the important Nam Dinh cotton mill. The Chinese also announced a manpower exchange whereby Chinese technical personnel would serve in Viet-Nam and Vietnamese workers would serve as apprentices in Chinese industrial enterprises. The final DRVN-PRC joint communique hinted at future expansion in trading relations.

In Moscow the Soviet government announced a non-refundable (free credit) grant of 400 million rubles (US\$100,000,000) to assist in the reconstruction of twenty-three industrial and public service enterprises (including engineering plants and textiles) and the development of Viet-Nam's tin and phosphate resources. Separate technical and trade agreements worth 200 million rubles (US\$50,000,000) were also negotiated. Included among them was finance for a three-cornered deal by which the USSR supplied certain goods to Burma in exchange for

⁵¹ The information on Ho's visits to Peking and Moscow has been gathered from a variety of sources: *ibid.*; Harold C. Hinton, Communist China in World Politics (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966), p.256; Roy Jumper and Marjorie Weiner Normand, "Vietnam", in George McT. Kahin, editor, Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia, Second Edition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964), p.506; William Kaye, "A Bowl of Rice Divided: The Economy of North Vietnam", in Honey, North Vietnam Today, op.cit., p.112; and McLane, "The Russians and Vietnam", op.cit., p.60. For the texts of the two communiques see: New China News Agency (Peking) in English morse to Southeast Asia, Europe, and North America, 0905 GMT, July 8, 1955 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (July 8, 1955), No.132, pp.AAAl-AAA6; and Soviet Home Service (Moscow), 2000 GMT, July 18, 1955 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (July 19, 1955), No.139, pp.CC1-CC4.

Burmese rice which was then shipped to Viet-Nam.⁵² Finally, the Soviets also agreed to exchange personnel with Viet-Nam.

Ho Chi Minh secured support from both Russia and China for the DRVN's policy on consultations. However, it is doubtful if the Soviet endorsement went far enough. For example, Bulganin was reported as remarking to the press at a reception for Ho Chi Minh that the DRVN was "partly a member of our family of democratic nations" and that it would become a full member only after unification and the accomplishment of "other great tasks".⁵³

Press reports indicate that the subject of Indochina never reached the Big Four agenda.⁵⁴ Discussions did take place between Eden and Molotov at lunch, but these were prompted more by the anti-ICC riots in Saigon than by Ho's special influence with the Russians. At these private talks Molotov raised the question of convening a conference of the 1954 Geneva Conference members which Eden politely turned down. According to The Economist,⁵⁵ the Russian Foreign Minister was "unexpectedly amiable" in accepting this.

However, during the final hours of the Big Four Conference, Molotov did mention Indochina - as a problem for future settlement. He said:

The Soviet delegation regrets that further attention was not given to the problems of Asia and the Far East at our conference.

⁵² "Ho Gets Burmese Rice", The Economist (September 24, 1955), Vol.176, No.5848, pp.1022-1023.

⁵³ Welles Hangen dispatch from Moscow in The New York Times (July 16, 1955), pp.1 and 3.

⁵⁴ "Taking Indo-China Gently", The Economist (July 30, 1955), Vol.176, No.5840, p.373.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Among others, such questions as the restoration of the legal rights of the Chinese People's Republic in the United Nations organization, the regulation of the situation in the Formosa region on the bases of the recognition of the indisputable rights of the Chinese people, the execution of the Geneva agreements on Indochina and other problems will not tolerate postponement.⁵⁶ [emphasis added].

These remarks were aimed more at China than the DRVN. China had been left out of the Big Four meeting and would shortly pursue a policy of trying to convene an Asian "Geneva-type" conference.⁵⁷ But the fact that "peaceful coexistence" was the order of the day, and that PRC-USA ambassadorial talks were about to open, meant that the DRVN was left out in the cold. The best hint of this is a report of Ho Chi Minh's remarks made immediately on his return to Hanoi. Ho drew attention to the American plot to partition Viet-Nam. He called on the Vietnamese to maintain their "fighting spirit" and vigilance against these moves. He thanked Russia and China for their "generous and disinterested" aid, and then concluded:

Just like during the resistance, our line at present must be, first and foremost, to rely upon ourselves whereas the help from friendly countries must come second.⁵⁸ [emphasis added].

⁵⁶ Reuters dispatch from Geneva in The New York Times (July 24, 1955), p.2.

⁵⁷ Henry R. Lieberman dispatch from Hong Kong in The New York Times (July 31, 1955), pp.1 and 2; excerpts from the text of a speech delivered by Chou En-lai to the closing session of the National People's Congress as translated by the New China News Agency are provided by Reuters in a dispatch from Hong Kong in *ibid.*, p.2.

⁵⁸ "Bao Cao Cua Ho Chu Tich Ve Viac Doan Dai Bieu Cua Chinh Phu Ta Di Tham Lien-Xo va Trung-Quoc", [Report by Chairman Ho Concerning the Work of the Delegation of Representatives of Our Government on Their Visit to the Soviet Union and China] Nhan Dan (July 24, 1955), No.508, p.1.

IV. REBELLION IN THE SOUTH

Political developments in southern Viet-Nam from March to August (1955) were the most confused and tumultuous ever recorded in the period since the Geneva Conference. During this time all the forces operating against the stability of the new Diem regime were given full play. From out of the frightening chaos and violence Diem emerged triumphant with the sect problem reduced to mere dissidence, with control over the Army restored, and with Bao Dai deposed. This new measure of strength permitted Diem to proclaim a Republic, to nominate himself as its first President, and to turn his energies towards eradicating from the South the influence of the Lao Dong Party organization and its supporters.

During the final days of March, Diem attempted to push the Binh Xuyen out of Saigon. It was only due to French efforts that a ceasefire was obtained and then gradually extended. In the interim an intermittent food blockade was imposed on the capital. This shaky truce finally broke down at the end of April when fighting erupted and reached full force in the streets of Saigon. The Army smashed the Binh Xuyen and drove them out of the city. Thereafter their units were pursued and scattered. During the months of July and August the Binh Xuyen went into death throes with a spate of terror bombings in Saigon. By October, however, the Binh Xuyen insurgency collapsed when Bay Vien fled to Paris.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Shaplen, The Lost Revolution, op.cit., pp.120-126; Lansdale, In the Midst of Wars, op.cit., pp.260-281; and Lancaster, The Emancipation of French Indochina, op.cit., pp.381-397.

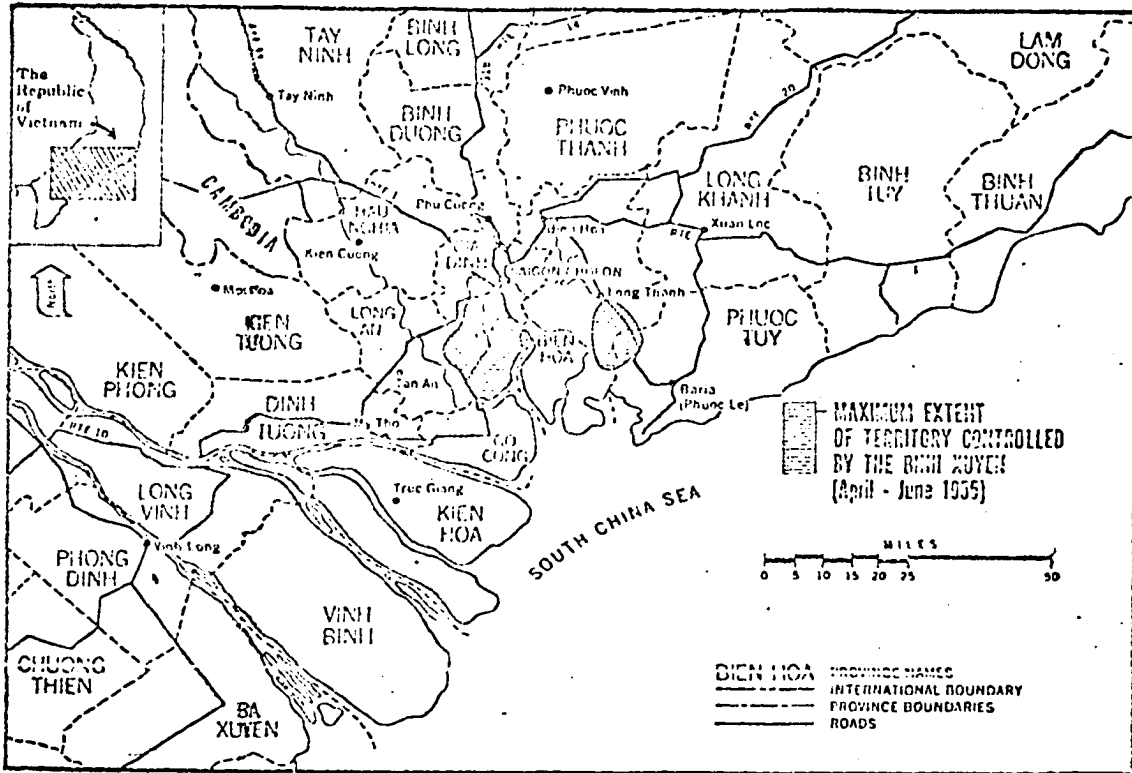
The tri-sect United Front against Diem proved similarly ineffective. The majority of the Cao Dai rallied to Diem and units loyal to Trinh Minh The were used in the expulsion of the Binh Xuyen from Saigon. The HOA Hao under Ba Cut provided minimal support for their ally. Despite rumors of Binh Xuyen-Hoa Hao coordination, nothing materialized. As has been noted, other Hoa Hao factions had rallied to the Diem government. While the Binh Xuyen crisis mounted, Army operations continued against Ba Cut and Tran Van Soai in the southwest region of Viet-Nam. In May the two Hoa Hao leaders declared "war" on the Diem regime and began sporadic actions against delta cities. In June, in reply to a mortar attack, the Army launched a series of major offensives which swept the Hoa Hao units from their home territory and drove them into strongholds in the hills among the Cambodian border in the That Son - Rach Gia sector. By July the Hoa Hao were a spent military force and as a delaying tactic they floated peace feelers. In October, the units under Ba Cut's command were sufficiently recuperated to conduct a counter-offensive in the Tri Ton area but this failed. Like the Binh Xuyen the Hoa Hao insurgency also collapsed. Both Soai and Ba Cut were able to keep up sporadic guerrilla raids until March and April of 1956 but by that time they represented no serious military threat to the Republic of Viet-Nam (RVN), as the Diem government was then called.⁶⁰

A third insurgency located in central Viet-Nam broke out during this period. It involved ultra-nationalists.

⁶⁰ The State of Viet-Nam (Viet-Nam Quoc Gia) became the Republic of Viet-Nam (Viet-Nam Cong Hoa) on October 26, 1955; Voice of Free Vietnam in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 0500 GMT, October 26, 1955.

MAP 3-1

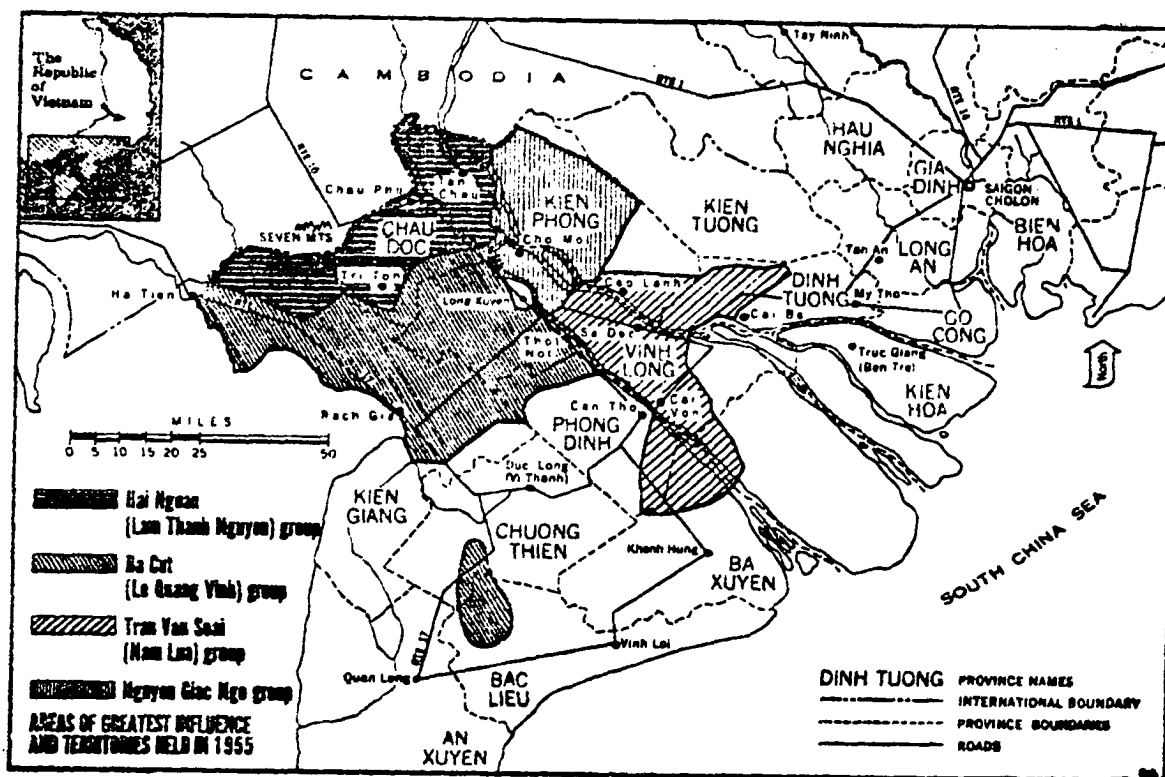
THE BINH XUYEN



SOURCE: "Rebellion Against My-Diem", in United States-Vietnam Relations, Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab 2, p.6.

TABLE 3-2

THE HOA HAO



I Hai Ngoan
(Lam Thanh Nguyen) group

II Ba Cut
(Le Quang Vinh) group

III Tran Van Soai
(Nam Lua) group

IV Nguyen Giac Ngo group

AREAS OF GREATEST INFLUENCE AND TERRITORIES HELD IN 1955

SOURCE: "Rebellion Against My-Diem", in United States - Vietnam Relations, Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab.2, p.8.

Sometime in January, 1955 the Dai Viet party rallied some 1,000 deserters from the Bao Chinh Doan (national guard) and established a maquis in the area where Laos joins Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces of Viet-Nam. They set up headquarters near the town of Ba Lang which promptly came under attack by the Army. The defenders were forced to flee. In March the Army launched another somewhat more successful attack against the suspected Dai Viet base area. This pattern of attack and pursuit was repeated until August, 1955 when Army units effectively overcame the Dai Viet Forces.⁶¹

The political situation in Saigon was just as chaotic as Diem put into motion a plan which would depose the Chief of State and leave himself in full control. The instrument of this policy, the creation of Diem's brother Ngo Dinh Nhu, was the "General Assembly of Democratic and Revolutionary Forces of the Nation".⁶² The "General Assembly" was formed

⁶¹ Murti, Vietnam Divided, op.cit., p.136; Buttinger, A Dragon Embattled, op.cit., Vol. 2, pp.870 and 1105; Ta Xuan Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet Nam", Vietnam Courier (March 1974), New Series No.22, p.21; United Press dispatch from Saigon in The New York Times (March 9, 1955), p.5; Associated Press dispatch from Saigon in ibid., (March 11, 1955), p.2; Voice of Vietnam in French to Southeast Asia, 1030 GMT, May 2, 1955; and Voice of the Dai Viet National Liberation Forces in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 2300 GMT, October 3, 1955; 0500 GMT, April 20, 1955; 2300 GMT, August 5, 1955; and 2300 GMT, August 8, 1955.

⁶² Nguyet Dam and Than Phong, Chin Nam Mau Lua Duoi Che Do Gia Dinh Tri Ngo Dinh Diem [Nine Years of Blood and Fire Under the Nepotism of Ngo Dinh Diem] (Saigon: Tac Gia Xuat Ban [published by the authors], 1964), pp.48-50; Francis J. Corley, "Viet-Nam Since Geneva", Thought [Fordham University Quarterly] (Winter 1958/59), Vol.XXXIII, No.131, pp.546-547; Buttinger, A Dragon Embattled, op.cit., Vol.2, pp.881-882; and "Rebellion Against My-Diem", United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab. 2, p.18.

at a mass meeting on April 30. It consisted of 200 persons representing 18 political groups. Its aims were to depose Bao Dai, to support Diem in his struggle against the sects and to oppose French colonialism by demanding the withdrawal of the Expeditionary Corps and the formation of a republic. Almost as soon as the "General Assembly" was formed a break-away Revolutionary Committee separated itself from the parent group. Its aims were similar to the "General Assembly" although couched in more extreme terms.

The height of the confrontation between the Revolutionary Committee and forces loyal to the ex-Emperor (Bao Dai) occurred when a delegation of the Revolutionary Committee left the Saigon Town Hall, where the "General Assembly" was meeting, and proceeded to Independence Palace to place their program before the Premier. In the meantime General Nguyen Van Vy, allegedly acting on orders from Bao Dai executed a mini-coup deposing Le Van Ty as head of the Army. Vy's plans fell through when he was taken into custody by the Revolutionary Committee (some reports say he was almost executed on the spot).⁶³ Vy was forced to make a statement to a hastily called press conference repudiating his actions. He also agreed to support the movement calling for the dismissal of the Bao Dai and the proclamation of a republic. Within hours of his statement Gen. Vy was released after a paratroop officer, Cao Van Tri, threatened to storm the palace.

On the next day, May 1st, Gen. Vy flew in units of the Imperial Guard from Da-Lat and declared himself back in command. He renounced his remarks of the previous night which

⁶³ Warner, The Last Confucian, op.cit., pp.103-104.

he said were made under duress. He once again affirmed his loyalty to Bao Dai. This affair was made even more confusing when the French representative, General Ely, ordered tanks into the streets in an effort to maintain order. The situation for the next several hours remained explosive. However, by the end of the day Diem succeeded in enticing key aides of Gen. Vy to desert their commander. When Gen. Vy learned that he had been out-maneuvred, and that Army support for his coup d'etat had ebbed, he fled to Da-Lat and eventually to France. The Army's threat to Diem was ended - for the present.

By May 2nd Diem had weathered the worst. He now had the support of three influential generals, Le Van Ty, Tran Van Don and Duong Van Minh. Together they served notice on Bao Dai that his power to direct events from France had come to an end.⁶⁴ On the very same day the Army launched an attack on the Binh Xuyen which dislodged them from their positions in Cholon, Saigon's sister city. Only the Revolutionary Committee remained to be brought under control.

Diem sought to undercut the appeal of the Revolutionary Committee on May 3rd by convening a caucus of municipal and provincial councillors. Their task was to hammer out an effective program for a National Political Congress to be convened on May 5th to consider the dismissal of Bao Dai. The Revolutionary Committee called a counter-congress on the same day. From this moment the two groups found themselves in a policy confrontation, with the Revolutionary Committee taking the more extreme stance.

⁶⁴ Murti, Vietnam Divided, op.cit., p.139; and Dispatch by A.M. Rosenthal in Saigon to The New York Times (May 3, 1955), pp.1 and 9.

The Revolutionary Committee was rent by factionalism. It had been weakened earlier when one of its patrons, Trinh Minh The, was killed in the fighting to expel the Binh Xuyen. By July, the Government of Viet-Nam felt that it was in a strong enough position to conduct police raids on its headquarters. By October the group dissolved itself in response to a request to do so by Diem. Diem then proceeded to harness the popular enthusiasm his policies attracted by moving against Bao Dai. In October a referendum deposed the former Emperor and a Republic was declared. Ngo Dinh Diem was now master of his own house, riding the crest of anti-colonial, anti-feudal (i.e. anti-monarchy), non-Communist nationalism.

The Lao Dong Party does not seem to have changed its policies in response to these events. The wrangling between Diem and his opponents merely confirmed their earlier analysis about the contradictions inherent in southern society. While turmoil continued, the Party's base areas were left untouched. There they proceeded to reorganize and strengthen both their secret organizations as well as the legal and semi-legal groups. At the height of the Binh Xuyen crisis they set up a Committee for the Relief of the Victims of the Fighting⁶⁵ which catered to the needs of an urban population whose homes had been destroyed. In July on the eve of the deadline for consultations, strikes were called in various southern cities to underscore the DRVN's policy initiatives calling for consultative conference and the normalization of relations.

⁶⁵ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.15; and Radio Hanoi in French, 2330 GMT, August 31, 1955 reports the arrest of several committee members.

V. THE EIGHTH PLENUM (August 1955)

The Eighth Party plenum was convened from August 13th to 20th. According to the final communique, it "examined the situation, reviewed the implementation of the resolution adopted by the Seventh Conference...and laid down new tasks for the entire party and people in the days to come".⁶⁶

The world situation was seen as becoming "to some extent less tense" although causes of international tension were present, especially in Indochina. There, according to the communique, the American imperialists were pushing their plans to wreck the peace.

The domestic scene was marked by the "great success of the national liberation struggle" which had led to the complete liberation of North Viet-Nam. This situation created "a firm basis for the entire Vietnamese people to struggle for achieving a peaceful, unified, independent, democratic and prosperous Vietnam".

The Eighth Plenum received a report on Ho Chi Minh's recent visits abroad. The communique noted that "a good result" was obtained because the friendship of the peoples of these countries had been tightened, the prestige of the DRVN heightened and further co-operation "in all spheres" promoted

⁶⁶ The text of the communique of the eighth plenum was broadcast by Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0600 GMT, August 22, 1955 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (August 23, 1955), No.164, pp.CCC8-CCCl1; "Lam Cho Nghi Quyet Cua Hoi Nghi Trung Uong Lan Thu 8 Tham Nhuan Den Moi Dang Vien", [Every Party Member Should Thoroughly Implement the Resolution of the Central Committee's 8th Plenum] Nhan Dan (September 26, 1955), No.572, p.1.

as a result of the trip. Soviet and Chinese economic assistance would enable the DRVN to "create new favourable conditions for its economic and cultural rehabilitation". Further the Party stated that the USSR and PRC had adopted views similar to itself concerning the situation in Indochina. Both Russia and China verbally supported the DRVN's political struggle to "consolidate peace, achieve unity, and ensure complete independence and democracy throughout the country".

By way of contrast the situation in the south was grim. There the American imperialists had stepped up their interference, encouraging "their agents" to oppose the Geneva Agreements, to flatly refuse consultations, to commit provocations against the ICC, to carry out a policy of terrorism and reprisals and to abolish all democratic freedoms. The aim of the U.S. was to turn South Viet-Nam into a U.S. military base. Finally, as a result of American actions "the French ha[ve] shunned its responsibility and refused to implement strictly the Geneva Agreements".⁶⁷

As a result of the above analysis, the communique continued, the following decisions were taken regarding the Party's immediate tasks: (1) America was designated the "concrete and immediate enemy" of Viet-Nam; (2) a broad National United Front "with an appropriate policy" must be set up to oppose the American imperialists and to consolidate the peace, unify the country and to "prevent the resumption of war in Indochina"; (3) the struggle to open consultations with the South Viet-Nam authorities must be continued; (4) the consolidation of the DRVN through agrarian reform and

⁶⁷ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0600 GMT, August 22, 1955.

economic rehabilitation must be conducted and (5) the ideological leadership of the Lao Dong Party must be further strengthened.⁶⁸

These decisions, it must be emphasized, were reached after reviewing the situation internationally, in the north and in the south. It should be clear from the plenum's communique that the Party realized only too well the significance of the fact that the deadline for holding consultations had come and gone. On the one hand, the DRVN had received only limited support from its allies. Both China and Russia were unwilling or unable to do much more for the DRVN on this matter, other than issue statements regretting the situation. On the other hand, the Diem government had indicated quite clearly that elections would not be held unless the DRVN could guarantee that they would be free. Despite assurances that the matter could be discussed, Diem never consulted with the north. The French had been supplanted by the United States and were shortly to state that they could no longer be held responsible for implementing the Geneva Agreements.⁶⁹ America stepped up its support for Diem both economically and by training the Army of the Republic of Viet-Nam.

The situation in the DRVN was still far from stable. The Party reaffirmed that priority should be given to the consolidation of its power in the north so as to create the basis for its efforts to reunify Viet-Nam. Towards this end

⁶⁸ Ibid.; excerpts from the resolution of the plenum are contained in "Lam Cho Nghi Quyet Cua Hoi Nghi Trung Uong Lan Thu 8 Tham Nhuan Den Moi Dang Vien", op.cit., p.1.

⁶⁹ Nutt, Troika on Trial, op.cit., Vol.I, pp.184-185.

the Party began preparing its cadres for the tasks ahead - carrying out agrarian reform and reorganizing and modernizing the PAVN.

The chaotic situation in the south was decidedly to the Party's advantage. To be sure, the official news media deplored Diem's actions against the sects because it turned Vietnamese against Vietnamese.⁷⁰ Lao Dong Party control of the Revolutionary Committee, although alleged, was never proven.⁷¹ It seems probable in fact that the Party was taken by surprise in the outpouring of nationalistic fervor. No doubt covert agents reacted to rather than directed the events of early May. In fact the impression created by police and intelligence reports covering the months following the seventh plenum is one of a low-level, patient building-up of both the Party and its allied organizations. In June one report revealed that Party cells in Saigon were concentrating on police, administrative and military affairs.⁷²

Prior to July 20th, the Party's underground concentrated its attention on political struggle activities which would

⁷⁰ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1545 GMT, May 2, 1955.

⁷¹ At least three members of the committee were former members of the Viet Minh Front and this gave rise for concern in some quarters; see: Warner, The Last Confucian, op.cit., pp.103-104; French fears of possible Communist influence were expressed to Dulles, U.S. Department of State telegram from Paris, SECTO 8 (May 8, 1955) to the Secretary of State which outlines the French Minister for the Associated States' (La Forest) fears that the Revolutionary Committee was under the influence of "Viet Minh" cadres (Ho Han Son, Nhi Lang and Doan Trung Con) in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 10, V.B.3., pp.959-961. These fears were discounted by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in The Current Saigon Crisis, Special National Intelligence Estimate (May 2, 1955), SNIE63.1-2/1 in ibid., pp. 955-958.

⁷² "Interrogation in 1958 of a prisoner who had been active in the 'Resistance' since 1945 until his capture by GVN [i.e. RVN] forces in 1956", Working Paper, Appendices, Item 12, p.14; attached to the interrogation report is a section labelled "Headquarters Comments" [probably the CIA station in Saigon] which summarizes an intelligence report dated June 1958:

reinforce and echo Ho's calls for North-South consultations. On July 1st the Standing Committee of the Lien Viet Front in Nam Bo issued an appeal to the people demanding general elections.⁷³ This was followed by a demonstration on July 3rd in which about 100 persons were arrested. Leaflets appeared calling for a general strike on July 10th. Demonstrations in Saigon and My Tho were followed the next day, July 11th, by similar actions in Hue and Da-Nang. On July 20th the movement reached its peak as the Party mobilized people in the area around Saigon to demand consultations. These actions continued until the end of the month and then faded out.

During August, after the 8th Plenum, reports reached Western intelligence agencies that a directive had been passed down from the Central Committee to its lower echelons instructing them to aim their attacks at "My-Diem" (the Americans and Ngo Dinh Diem).⁷⁴ The intention was to bring about their isolation in the eyes of the people so that a "less dangerous" administration would be in power to consult with the DRVN over elections. Shortly thereafter strikes among transport workers broke out in Da-Nang, Hoi-An, Vinh-Diem and Hue.⁷⁵ Mixed in with the worker's demands were

⁷³ Vu Can, "The People's Struggles Against the US-Diem Regime", op.cit., pp.75 and 109.

⁷⁴ U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Current Intelligence Weekly Review (October 27, 1955) cited in "The Role of Hanoi", in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab 3, p.45.

⁷⁵ Vu Can, "The People's Struggles Against the US-Diem Regime", op.cit., p.109; New China News Agency in English, 1800 GMT, September 10, 1955 cites a dispatch (untranscribed) from the Vietnam News Agency dated September 9, 1955.

calls for consultations with the DRVN. These activities were probably planned to coincide with a scheduled visit of Ngo Dinh Diem to central Viet-Nam. Leaflets also appeared in the delta towns of Chau Doc, Rach Gia, Bac Lieu and Ben Tre with the same message.⁷⁶

The major preoccupation of the 8th Plenum was to set up a new National United Front to lead the consolidation of the north and the political struggle in the south, given the clear indication that it was unlikely that the Geneva Agreements would be implemented within the time-frame envisaged in July 1954.

VI. CONCLUSION

The time from the end of the Geneva Conference (July 1954) until the Eighth Plenum (August 1955) may be divided into two periods. Party activity during the first period (July-September 1954) was characterized by the implementation of the cease-fire and regroupment provisions of the Geneva Agreements. On most other matters the Party seems to have adopted a "wait-and-see" attitude. During the second period (September 1954 - August 1955) the Party discharged its responsibilities under the Geneva Agreements (military regroupment) and then moved on several fronts to bring about the consultative conference with representatives of "the competent authorities" in the south.

There were three features of this drive to secure agreement on consultations: (1) diplomatic activity, (2) direct approaches to the government in Saigon and

⁷⁶ Ibid.

(3) a low-level political struggle movement. The DRVN made some important gains on the international front. Nehru of India and U Nu of Burma paid brief visits to Hanoi. These were reciprocated by Pham Van Dong who called in at New Delhi and Rangoon enroute to the Bandung Conference. Nehru's stance in favour of elections in Viet-Nam surely must have pleased DRVN leaders. No doubt they welcomed all statements endorsing the prompt carrying out of the political provisions of the Geneva Agreements whose implementation they saw to their own advantage.⁷⁷

DRVN approaches to the Soviet Union and China, however, were disappointing. Ho Chi Minh's visits to Peking and Moscow during the summer of 1955 must have played an important role in convincing Party officials that unification would come about primarily on the basis of their own efforts. Relations with France were of a similar bitter-sweet quality. Initially prospects looked bright as Paris dispatched Jean Sainteny to Hanoi to iron out problems connected with the

⁷⁷ The reaction of the State of Viet-Nam to various endorsements of the electoral provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreements was the reverse; SarDesai writes: "(t)he reaction of the government of South Vietnam was sharp and bitter to the DRV's proposal for holding a conference and to the support given by India and the Communist countries to it. Diem's propaganda machinery launched an intensive campaign against the Communists, the Geneva Agreements, and the Indian and Polish delegations on the ICC". Sar Desai, Indian Foreign Policy, op.cit., p.89. Diem's insistence that the major obstacle to holding elections was that there was no democratic freedoms in the north cannot be taken at face value; rather they were a calculated propaganda ploy borrowed from the Western experience with the Soviet Union over the question of German unification. Free elections in Germany would have meant unification with a Western-orientated government. Similar elections in Viet-Nam would, in all probability, have resulted in an electoral victory for Ho Chi Minh. Calls for supervision by the United Nations can hardly be taken as serious as both parts of Viet-Nam were not even members. In 1954-55, it should be recalled, the United States not only had a veto in the Security Council but dominated the General Assembly as well.

considerable French economic interests in the north.⁷⁸
 However Sainteny's efforts were undermined by opposition within the Mendes-France government as well as by outright American hostility. By December 1954 an exasperated Pham Van Dong was moved to remark to a specially convened press conference:

France must choose between Washington and Hanoi and only the latter choice will enable her to retain political and economic positions in the Pacific. But France is veering in the direction of Washington. She went to Manila to sign a pact of aggression. France is hesitating. But a policy must be based on stable foundations. One cannot indulge in acrobatics for ever.⁷⁹

The DRVN's approaches to the State of Viet-Nam were made initially through semi-governmental bodies. However the most important initiative was Pham Van Dong's June 6, 1955 public request to the Diem government. No doubt Diem's refusal was anticipated. In such circumstances the DRVN could only hope that its diplomacy combined with pressure from below (i.e., from within South Viet-Nam itself) would modify this stance. At this time there remained the likelihood that the Diem government might collapse (although this became less certain with each passing week).

The political struggle movement in South Viet-Nam got off to a very low-keyed beginning with the Movement for the Defense of Peace. Diem's prompt repression of the movement must have served notice to the Party's leaders in

⁷⁸ Jean Sainteny, Ho Chi Minh and His Vietnam: A Personal Memoir, Translated from the French by Herma Briffault (Chicago: Cowles Book Co., Inc., 1972), pp.105-159.

⁷⁹ Dispatch by Max Clos from Hai Phong in Le Monde (January 23, 1955), p.8.

the underground to move cautiously. The Party's fixation with demonstrations and such like in favour of consultations seems curiously disembodied from the major events of this period. There is no evidence that the Party sought to exploit and profit from the Hinh affair or the Binh Xuyen crisis. Initially, at least, these events must have been viewed as elements of a self-fulfilling prophecy as the "internal contradictions" among the government, Army, Revolutionary Committee(s) and sects in South Viet-Nam worked themselves out.

One explanation of the Party's aloofness might be found in its efforts to restructure the Lien Viet Front into an organization suitable for political struggle under the terms of the Geneva Agreements. As we have noted, a preparatory committee was set up in January in effect to work out the details of modifying the program, platform, membership, etc. Later in the year, when it became clear that consultations were not going to be held on schedule, the new goals and objectives of the front took on added importance. Chapter four provides the details of the new organization which emerged.

The period after May 1955 witnessed the transformation of the VWP as an underground organization into a political party in control of all of Viet-Nam north of the seventeenth parallel. Almost at once the VWP was confronted with the staggering tasks of running an economy damaged by years of war: goods were scarce, inflation rampant and famine threatened. Bui Cong Trung, the secretary-general of the DRVN's Economic and Financial Commission recalled years later:

Without the 207,000 tons of rice which we received from the fraternal socialist countries (173,000 tons of rice from the USSR, and 32,500 tons from China) at the end of 1954 and in 1955 and 1956, then we could not have stabilized the prices which continued to increase greatly, especially in 1955.⁸⁰

In a separate publication Trung acknowledged:

The Soviet Union supplied us with 170,000 tons of refined rice...; the Chinese People's Republic furnished us with...rice; other countries - the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Albania, Rumania and Mongolia - have extended their assistance in the past and continue to assist us by supplying drugs, fabrics, industrial goods, rice and cattle. All this allowed us to liquidate famine and epidemics, to make a considerable improvement in the public health system and to strike a crushing blow at the speculators, who sharply raised prices on all the most important commodities.⁸¹

Several important tasks immediately confronted Party leaders as they absorbed the "newly liberated areas" into the DRVN governmental structure. Increased numbers of administrative and technical cadres had to be recruited and trained. Public order and security had to be established throughout the territory. Rail lines and other parts of the transport-communications network had to be repaired. one of the most far-reaching decisions taken at this time concerned extending the provisions of the 1953 land reform

⁸⁰ Bui Cong Trung, "The Food Problem", Nghien Cuu Kinh Te [Economic Research] (February 1961) translated by United States Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS), No.10, 1974, p.13.

⁸¹ Bui Cong Trung, "Aid by Countries in the Socialist Camp in Restoring and Developing the National Economy of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam", in Demokratichevskaya Respublika V'yetnam (Moscow: Institute of the People's of Asia of the Academy of Sciences USSR, 1960), translated by U.S. JPRS No.4,925 (1961), p.24, emphasis added. See also the interview with Phan Anh, Minister of Commerce, Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, December 25, 1956.

laws (which had been promulgated to increase morale during the Dien Bien Phu campaign) to areas recently under French control.⁸² In practice this meant reducing rent and transferring ownership, through land redistribution. At that time village affairs were still dominated by the landlords, even in areas under the control of the resistance government. Thus the Party's decision to move ahead with a program which differentiated along class lines immediately provoked confrontation. Accordingly a "movement to suppress counter-revolutionaries" (on the face of it a public security measure) was combined with the land reform campaign.⁸³ Within a year, when things got out of hand, the Party would acknowledge the error of this decision; but in the final quarter of 1955 this combination seemed an expedient way of handling two problems at once.

⁸² Christine White, "Class and Revolution: Land Reform in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1953-1956)", Paper delivered to the First Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia, The University of Melbourne (May 16, 1976), pp.6-10, and Tran Phuong, "The Land Reform", Vietnamese Studies (1965), No.7, Pages of History 1945-1954, pp.189-191.

⁸³ Ibid., pp.190-191; "Day Manh Cong Tac Cung Co Mien Bac", [Promote the Work of Consolidating the North] Nhan Dan (October 3, 1955), No.579, p.1, is an editorial comment on the resolutions of the 8th plenum.

CHAPTER 4

POLITICAL STRUGGLE AND THE FATHERLAND FRONT (September 1955 - April 1956)

I. THE FATHERLAND FRONT AND THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Immediately after the 8th Plenum a special committee, originally formed in January, 1955, announced that a national congress of the Lien Viet Front would convene on September 5th.¹ It was at this congress, as well as at the 5th Session of the DRVN's National Assembly, that the VWP revealed in detail how it would carry on the struggle to reunify Viet-Nam in light of the failure of consultations to take place in July.

The National Congress of the Lien Viet Front met from September 5-10. Its main preoccupations were outlined in the reports delivered by senior officials: Ta Quang Buu (on the implementation of the Geneva Agreements), Ho Viet Thang (on land rent reduction), Phan Anh (on the economy), Truong Chinh (on the united front strategy) and Hoang Quoc Viet (who submitted a draft program). Two major documents accompanied the announcement that a new front, the Fatherland Front (Mat Tran To Quoc) had been formed.

¹ "Thong Cao cua Ban van dong Dai Hoi Mat Tran Dan Toc Thong Nhat Toan Quoc", [Communique of the Sponsoring Committee of the Congress of the National United Front] Nhan Dan (August 23, 1955), No.538, p.1. The sponsoring Committee was formed following the National Congress of the Viet-Nam National United Front in January, 1955.

The first document, the manifesto for the new Front,² explained that after the signing of the 1954 Geneva Agreements the struggle of the Vietnamese people entered a "new phase", which was described as follows:

The phase of political struggle to consolidate peace, achieve unity, and to ensure complete independence and democracy throughout the country.

However, because of the "intensified intervention of the U.S. imperialists in Indochina, the implementation of the Geneva Agreements is being hindered and the peace, unity, independence and democracy of our country are being threatened". Therefore the Fatherland Front was being formed for the purpose of fulfilling three major tasks:

1. to struggle for the strict implementation of the Geneva Agreements and for the consolidation of peace and the achievement of national unification.
2. to consolidate North Viet-Nam from every point of view; at the same time uphold and push forward the patriotic movement of our compatriots in the South.
3. to widen and consolidate the National United Front throughout the country; to gain the ever more active endorsement and support from peace-loving people all over the world.

The key features of both the manifesto and the second major document, the platform,³ were the specific details they provided on the question of membership in the Front

² "Tuyen Ngon cua Mat Tran To Quoc Viet Nam", [Manifesto of the Viet-Nam Fatherland Front] Nhan Dan (September 14, 1955), No.560, pp.1 and 4.

³ "Cuong Linh cua Mat Tran To Quoc Viet Nam", [Platform of the Viet-Nam Fatherland Front] Nhan Dan (September 14, 1955), No.560, p.2.

and, more importantly, on the details of reunification now that the consultative machinery written into the Geneva Agreements had broken down.

According to the manifesto, the Fatherland Front was to include "the organizations and individuals affiliated with the former Lien Viet Front, and also those who have not yet joined the Lien Viet Front who belong ... to different social strata and have different political affiliations". In particular, this passage referred to all citizens "without distinction as to sex, age, nationality, social class, political affiliations, and religious creed and no matter which side they supported in the past - who now favour peace, unification, independence, and democracy..."

The platform set forth ten major policies which were summarised under the following headings:

1. Achieve National Independence
2. Achieve National Unification
3. Build a Democratic Regime
4. Develop the Economy and Raise Production
5. Carry Out Land Reform
6. Carry Out a Rational Social Policy
7. Promote Culture and Education
8. Consolidate National Defence and Defend the Fatherland
9. Carry out a Peaceful and Independent Foreign Policy
10. The Vietnamese People Throughout the Country are to be Broadly United

It should be obvious that the Fatherland Front was formed at this time as the leading mass organization to lead the

reconstruction of the North as much as to lead the reunification struggle in the South. Indeed, the platform recognized that "[a]t present, the social and political situations in Northern and Southern Vietnam are quite different" and that to achieve the peaceful reunification of Viet-Nam "we should take into account the concrete situation in the two zones as well as the legitimate interests and aspirations of various strata of the people".

According to points 2 and 3 of the Front's platform, general elections would be held to establish a national assembly which in turn would appoint a central coalition government. While the details of re-uniting the two zones were being worked out the differences between them would be recognized by permitting each zone "to issue local laws suited to the characteristics of [each] region..."

In other words, the program and platform of the Fatherland Front represented a major attempt by the VWP to overcome the effects of partition by offering a conciliatory approach to the problem of reunification. Implicit in the platform was the view that reunification was a complex process which would take time to accomplish.

Immediately after the Congress, the Executive Committee of the Fatherland Front met and set out a program of action for the next few months (September-December 1955) which embodied four points:⁴

⁴ "Hoi Nghi Lan Thu Nhat Cua Uy Ban Trung Uong Mat Tran To Quoc Viet Nam", [The First Conference of the Central Committee of the Viet-Nam Fatherland Front] Nhan Dan (September 13, 1955), No.559, p.1.

1. organize local congresses of the Front in various regions
2. publicize the Front's platforms and statute and organise the people to study them
3. push the present political struggle throughout Viet-Nam
4. mobilize the people to carry out all tasks to consolidate the North

After the Executive Committee's session the DRVN's National Assembly was called into its 5th Session, which lasted from September 15th to 20th. Pham Van Dong, DRVN vice premier, delivered a major report, part one of which addressed itself to the details of the new DRVN reunification policy.⁵

Pham Van Dong recalled and laid renewed emphasis on his August 17th letter⁶ to the co-chairman of the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina in which he urged them "to take all necessary measures" to ensure that the political provisions of the Geneva Agreements were carried out. Specifically Pham Van Dong was referring to consultations between the two zones. He too stressed that "one should take into account the present political situation of Vietnam: in the Northern and the Southern Zones of Vietnam there exist two different political regimes".

⁵ "Bao Cao cua Chinh Phu Truoc Khoa Hop Thu Nam cua Quoc Hoi", [Report of the Government Before the 5th Session of the National Assembly] Nhan Dan (September 17, 1955), No.563, pp.1-3.

⁶ "Thu cua Ong Pham-Van-Dong Bo Truong Bo Ngoai Giao Nuoc Viet-nam Dan-Chu Cong-Hoa gui Hai Chu Tich Hoi Nghi Gio-Ne-Vo", [Letter of Mr Pham Van Dong, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam to the Two Co-Chairman of the Geneva Conference] Nhan Dan (September 15, 1955), No.561, pp.1 and 4.

Dong's solution was to emphasize the necessity for a "bloc of nation-wide unity ... the broadest ever seen in our history". This bloc would consist of: "various nationalities, social classes and strata, political parties, religious bodies, and all patriotic Vietnamese citizens who desire to see the country become peaceful, united, independent and democratic. This nation-wide united bloc would embrace both the North and the South with all the differences between the two zones". It was on this basis that Vice Premier Dong was offering to begin consultations with the State of Viet-Nam, [otherwise, he feared, the United States and Diem would resume the fighting]. Pham Van Dong was quite specific on this point:

At present two roads lie before the authorities in South Vietnam: either the authorities in South Vietnam will act in accordance with the aspirations of the people and respond to the proposal of the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and agree to open a consultative conference; then the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam will readily examine and discuss with the authorities in South Vietnam all the issues raised by them in a spirit of understanding the conciliation so as to come to agreement for the sake of the supreme interests of the Fatherland and the people. Or the authorities in Vietnam, bent on following the U.S. imperialists, will continue to wreck the Geneva Agreements, reject the holding of consultations and general elections, unscrupulously sell out the country, and serve as henchmen of the imperialists in an attempt to partition the country and prepare the resumption of war. The first road is a glorious one. The second road is a road full of crimes and would surely lead the authorities in South Vietnam to bitter failure.

Dong then went on to comment on consultations and general elections:

The U.S. imperialists and the international reactionaries often raise the question: If a consultative conference is convened and free general elections were held, North Vietnam

will defeat South Vietnam. This is a provocative and divisive argument aimed at sabotaging the movement for national unification of our people. The fundamental question here does not lie in whether the North or the South would win. The fundamental question is that North and South should come to agreement on the questions relating to the unification of the country. Who shall win? Neither will the North defeat the South nor will the South defeat the North. Who shall win, then? The Vietnamese people shall win! Those defeated will be the U.S. imperialist warmongers and their lackeys.

In the ensuing months the VWP would prepare the northern zone for the crucial fifth phase of mobilization for land reform, launch an international diplomatic offensive to reconvene the Geneva Conference and attempt to rally support in the South around the program of the Fatherland Front.

II. CREATING POLITICAL STABILITY IN THE SOUTH (August - October 1955)

At the same time as the DRVN was setting forth its design for the future, the State of Viet-Nam, under the premiership of Ngo Dinh Diem, was poised ready to deal with the triple threat of (1) continued sect rebellion, (2) problems of governmental legitimacy and (3) the communist movement.

The Diem regime had succeeded in April-May 1955 in ousting the Binh Xuyen forces from Saigon. They had retreated to the Rung Sat swamp area south-east of Saigon where they continued their depredations. In late September Duong Van Minh was given responsibility for operations against them (called Operation Hoang Dieu). In a month-long campaign Minh succeeded in smashing the Binh Xuyen

units, reducing their force of 4-5,000 men into much smaller units. By late October most observers agreed that the Binh Xuyen armed forces no longer represented a serious threat to the security of the Saigon government.

At the same time Diem also moved against the Cao Dai Sect. In early October General Nguyen Thanh Phuong disarmed the 300-man Papal Guard at the Cao Dai centre of Tay Ninh and placed Pope Pham Cong Tac under virtual house arrest along with his two daughters.⁷ Elsewhere, troops raided the centre of the Cao Dai Minh Chon Dau Sect at Giong Ham in Ca Mau province.⁸

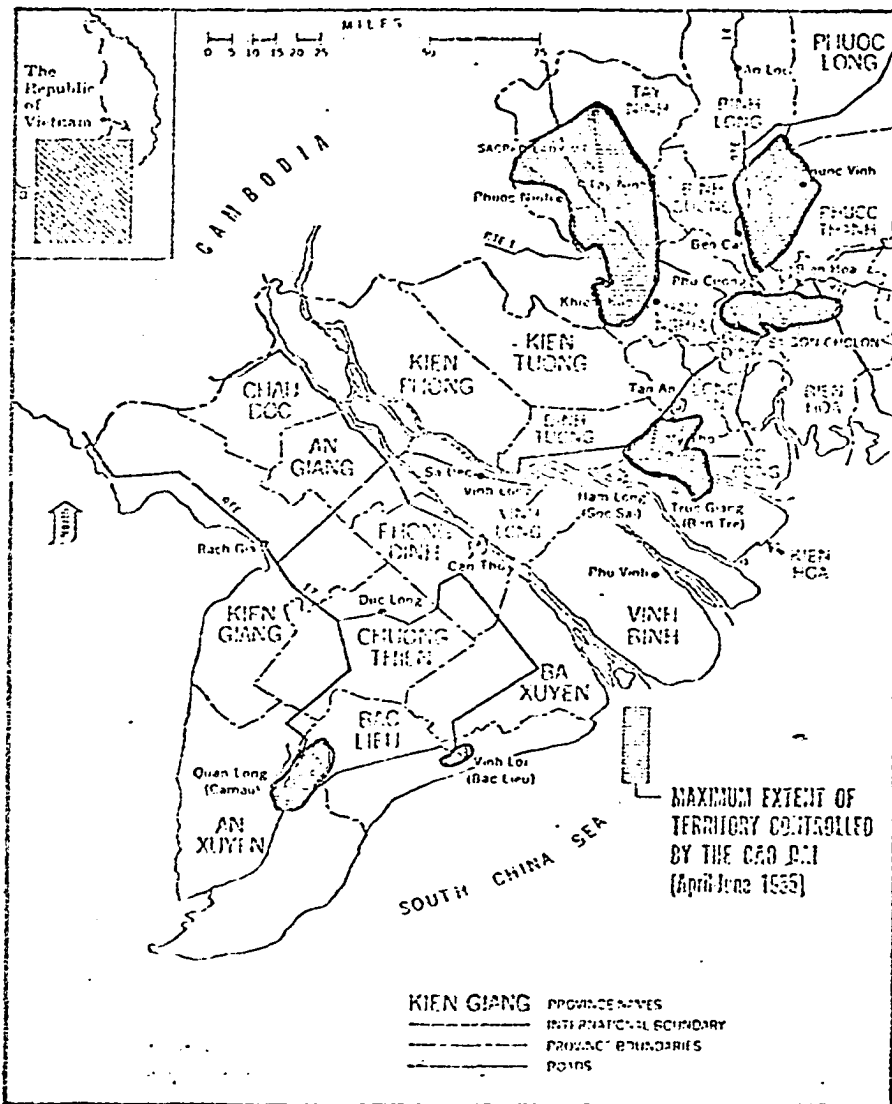
⁷ Dispatch from Henry R. Lieberman in Tay Ninh to The New York Times (November 6, 1955), p.33; Lancaster, The Emancipation of French Indochina, op.cit., p.397.

⁸ Vietnam News Agency in Vietnamese morse to Vietnam, 0932 GMT, December 14, 1955 and Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 1200 GMT, December 14, 1955. The Cao Dai sect is not, as is commonly assumed, a unified movement. The Minh Chon Dau Cao Dai is a component of one of three major groupings within the Cao Dai sect which emerged in the 1930's. Various "Holy Sees" were created throughout the Mekong Delta in rivalry to the better known Holy See in Tay Ninh province. The center of the Minh Chon Dao is in Bac Lieu province, adjacent to Ca Mau. During the Resistance War a grouping of "Twelve Unified Sects" was active with the Viet Minh and Lien Viet Fronts. Its leader, Cao Trieu Phat, regrouped to the North and played an active role in Viet-Nam Fatherland Front. The Minh Chon Dau (Bright and True) was one of the 12 sects. See: R.B. Smith, "An Introduction to Caodaism", Part I, "Origins and Early History", Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies (1970), Vol.XXXIII, Part 2, pp.335-349; R.B. Smith, "An Introduction to Caodaism", Part II, "Beliefs and Organization", ibid., (1970), Vol. XXXIII, Part 3, pp.573-589; and Ralph Smith, "Antecedents of the 'Viet Cong'", in Michael Leifer, editor, Nationalism, Revolution and Evolution in South-East Asia (Hull: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, The University of Hull, 1970), Hull Monographs on South-East Asia, No.2, pp.1-15. For a general discussion see also: Gerald C. Hickey, Village in Viet-Nam (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 14-15, 66-73, and 291-294; Frances R. Hill, "Millenarian Machines in South Vietnam", Contemporary Studies in Society and History (July 1971), Vol.3, No.3, pp.324-350; Roy

cont'd

MAP 4-1

THE CAO DAI



SOURCE: "Rebellion Against My-Diem", in United States-Vietnam Relations, Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab 2, p. 4.

Operations against various Hoa Hao units declined during August and September as SVN armed forces withdrew to participate in an American-inspired training program.⁹ This lull in western Nam Bo followed a successful National Army drive described in the previous chapter.

Ngo Dinh Diem moved to establish his complete dominance on the domestic political scene by scheduling a referendum for October 23rd in which the people of South Viet-Nam would be given a choice of whether or not to dispose Emperor Bao Dai and to name him (Diem) as Chief of State. It was understood that a successful result for Diem would be followed by declaring Viet-Nam a republic, drawing up a new constitution and by setting up a National Assembly.

At the same time Diem was clearing the deck domestically, he was also taking action with respect to the status of the remaining French forces still in Viet-Nam. In July of 1955 he had dispatched a mission to Paris headed by Nguyen Van Chau for this purpose. The talks, suspended to allow the French Premier Edgar Faure to attend the Geneva Summit, were

8 cont'd

Jumper, "The Cao Dai of Tay Ninh: The Politics of a Political-Religious Sect in South Vietnam", in Balkrishna G. Gokhale, editor, Asian Studies I - A Collection of Papers on Aspects of Asian History and Civilization (Bombay: Popular Praksshan, 1966), pp.142-154; Roy Jumper, "Sects and Communism in South Vietnam", Orbis (Spring 1959), Vol.III, No.1, pp.85-96; Victor L. Oliver, "Caodaism: A Vietnamese Example of Sectarian Development", Ph.D. Thesis, Syracuse University, 1972; and Fall, "The Political-Religious Sects of Vietnam", op.cit.

⁹ "Mr Diem's Visitor", The Economist (August 27, 1955), Vol.176, No.5844, p.684.

never resumed and on October 13 the mission was recalled.¹⁰ Despite this set-back it was clear that Diem intended to take advantage of the unilateral French declaration¹¹ made at the conclusion of the Geneva Conference to request the withdrawal of the French forces.

Because of more pressing domestic threats described in the previous chapter, Diem had not yet gotten around to giving full attention to the Communist organization in the rural areas. Under American direction Diem's military forces had conducted two major operations to "recover" the temporary regrouping zones used by PAVN forces.¹² In July 1955 in central Viet-Nam an experimental Anti-Communist Denunciation Campaign had been launched which lasted until the end of August. This was later termed "stage one of the first period" and was described as one of adjustment in which "responsible organs" were created

¹⁰ Saigon dispatch in The New York Times (October 14, 1955), p.5; Murti, Vietnam Divided, op.cit., p.151; and Robert MacAlister, "The Great Gamble: United States Policy Towards South Viet-Nam from July 1954 to July 1956", M.A. Thesis, The University of Chicago, 1958, p.194.

¹¹ The French had declared, inter alia, its readiness "to withdraw its troops from the territory of Cambodia, Laos and Viet-Nam, at the request of the Governments concerned and within a period which shall be fixed by agreement between the parties..."; Great Britain, Further Documents Relating to the Discussion of Indo-China at the Geneva Conference, Cmd. 9239, op.cit.

¹² These were Operation Liberty, conducted in the Ca Mau regrouping zone, and Operation Giai Phong, conducted in the Quang Ngai-Binh Dinh regrouping zone; Lansdale, In the Midst of Wars, op.cit., pp.228-243.

at all levels and staffed by recently trained cadres. Plans were drawn for stage 2 (1 September - 20 October) in which "anti-subversion committees and units" were set-up within the military and among the civilian population. It was only in stage three (21 October - 20 May 1956) that real progress was made in attacking the Communists' underground organization. There is some evidence, however, to indicate that the campaign was successful much earlier in certain localities. One defector reported that 50% of his Tay Ninh provincial committee was decimated by the summer of 1955.¹³ Another source, quoting figures supplied to the ICC by the PAVN High Command, stated that by the beginning of July 1955 as a result of the Anti-Communist Denunciation Campaign, 482 persons were killed, 149 had disappeared, 692 had been wounded and 9,100 imprisoned.¹⁴

III. POLITICAL STRUGGLE IN THE SOUTH (August - October 1955)

After the July 1955 deadline for the start of consultations passed Party leaders in the South began to face a mood of pessimism on the part of their supporters.

¹³ Race, "The Origins of the Second Indochina War", op.cit., p.362. It should be noted that Race's informant, Vo Van An, was speaking about a province in which forces loyal to Diem had been operating against dissident Cao Dai forces.

¹⁴ Burchett, North of the 17th Parallel, op.cit., p.247. Although many complaints were made to the ICC, only a few were investigated and even fewer resolved. Cases of reprisals in violation of the Geneva Agreements were established. PAVN figures, of course, must be taken as an upper limit. The figures here do not appear grossly exaggerated. An extended discussion may be found in chapters seven and eight.

By the Party's own account, this was countered by the educational efforts of the cadres and re-emphasis on the political struggle movement to demand consultations and the holding of general elections.¹⁵ During August and September sporadic strikes were conducted in the central region of Viet-Nam in the towns of Hue, Da-Nang and Hoi An and in the Delta provinces of Chau Doc, Rach Gia, Bac Lieu and Ben Tre where support was voiced for these demands. Later, in 1956, support was elicited for the various calls by DRVN officials to reconvene the Geneva Conference.

But much more significant developments were being planned in light of the VWP's 8th Plenum and its decision to form the Fatherland Front. Obviously the call for the inclusion of persons "not yet members" of the Lien Viet Front was directed at dissident sect elements in the South as well as towards other non-Communist but anti-Diem personalities in South Viet-Nam, in France and in the North.¹⁶ Diem's contemplated referendum represented a thrust at undermining simultaneously both the sects' and communists' claim to legitimacy. The creation of a Republic with its own Constitution and National Assembly would likewise bloc

¹⁵ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.15.

¹⁶ The original Sponsoring Committee was to have included members who had not served with the Lien Viet Front in the past; Vietnam News Agency in English Morse to Southeast Asia, 0530 GMT, January 13, 1955. A subject deserving special study is the connection between Party officials in France and the considerable group of non-Communist Vietnamese political emigres. It was often alleged that the VWP was conducting talks with several notable personalities, offering them a place in a post-Diem government.

the VWP's plans to reunify Viet-Nam and the sects' claims to be operating under the orders of the legitimate head of state.

Although the precise factual details are still a subject of considerable controversy,¹⁷ there is sufficient evidence at hand to paint the following picture. In broadest terms the VWP decided to form an alliance with its own worst enemies, the armed forces of the religious sects, in an attempt to undermine the Diem government.

In early August it was reported that Van Tien Dung, a PAVN Colonel-General and former chief of the Viet-Minh delegation to the ICC in Saigon, had secretly entered the U Minh maquis in Ca Mau province to confer with members of the Nam Bo Regional Committee.¹⁸ The precise nature of his mission was unclear but it was reported that "a ceremony of a military nature" had taken place.¹⁹ "Communist

¹⁷ Gareth Porter has alleged that one set of documents dealing with Party-Sect cooperation [Republic of Vietnam, Ministry of Information, Communist Subversive Activities Contrary to the Spirit of the Geneva Agreements, 1956] was fabricated by the Diem regime; "Testimony of D. Gareth Porter", op.cit., pp.10-11. This author was unable to obtain access to this collection when he visited Washington, D.C. in December 1975. All attempts to obtain photocopies from the curator of the Bernard B. Fall Collection at Howard University, where the source is held, have been unsuccessful. My evidence for Party-Sect cooperation rests on other material, including sources published in Hanoi.

¹⁸ "Ho Gets Burmese Rice", op.cit., pp.1022-1023, bases its information on "radio reports which have not been denied"; presumably this refers to Voice of the Dai Viet National Liberation Troops in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 2300 GMT, August 8, 1955.

¹⁹ Ibid.

circles" were quoted as denying that an invasion across the 17th parallel was in the offing but rather that the Diem regime could be toppled by using "militants now in the South".²⁰ Contemporary American intelligence sources report their awareness of a directive from the VWP to its subordinate echelons stressing that action directed against the Diem regime would contribute to weakening the DRVN's prospective conference partner.²¹

It was known that the Party retained a military capability in the South. In late August, in fact, two companies were reported to be in the U Minh area.²² One knowledgeable observer has stated that the Party could have activated up to 8 regiments (6,000 men) during the Binh Xuyen crisis (April-May 1955).²³ Was Van Tien Dung's

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ United States Central Intelligence Agency, Central Intelligence Weekly Review (October 27, 1955), op.cit.

²² Voice of the Dai Viet National Liberation Troops in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 2300 GMT, August 21, 1955; a review of American and RVN estimates of "Viet Minh" force strengths produced during 1954-1960 concluded: "Viet Minh force levels in the south were variously estimated by the U.S. during this period but never exceeded 10,000; GVN [i.e. RVN] estimates, which tended to include all organized dissidents, were consistently lower than U.S. estimates, never exceeding 8,000. Of these estimated dissidents, no more than some 2,000 were considered 'active' by any available estimate in the period 1954-1960", in "United States Training of the Vietnames National Army", in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.4, pp.7-8.

²³ Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., p.36. Race's source is an interview with Vo Van An, in 1954-55 an alternate member of the Party's Tay Ninh province committee.

alleged visit somehow connected with reports in late August of "Viet Minh infiltration ... into the sectarian armies, hitherto relatively free of Communist influence"?²⁴

During the following month, as one report makes clear, this seemed to be the case: "The Hoa Hao and the Binh Xuyen have suffered military defeats but they are not destroyed. The remnants are tending to join up with the Viet Minh in the South to form a conglomerate underground opposition to Diem".²⁵ Significantly the same source stated that the Cao Dai, the strongest military force, was "clearly watching for its moment".

After the 8th Plenum, when the results of Gen. Dung's trip would have been available, the VWP Central Committee issued instructions to the Nam Bo Regional Committee permitting, in the words of a SVN intelligence report, "tactics of violence ... to be applied by the Viet Cong in South Vietnam concurrently with political operations".²⁶ Other intelligence reports mentioned that the dispatch of new instructions was accompanied by the trip south of at least one very high-level delegation, as well as by numerous other, smaller groups concerned with political,

²⁴ "Mr Diem's Visitor", op.cit., p.684.

²⁵ Radio France-Asie in English to Europe, 0830 GMT, September 8, 1955.

²⁶ "An Intelligence report from an agent of the Government of Viet-Nam [sic] who had contact with Vietnamese Communist Party members in the Saigon area in 1956", Working Paper, Appendices, Item 31, pp.1-2.

military, propaganda, intelligence and cultural affairs.²⁷ There can be no doubt that this intensified activity, miniscule by later standards, was directly related to the formation of the Fatherland Front. One political delegation sent from the North was charged with forming an anti-Diem and anti-American movement by obtaining the support of anti-Diem and pro-French elements.²⁸ A military delegation was charged with maintaining a base in eastern Nam Bo with a view towards assisting future infiltration into South Viet-Nam via Laos and Cambodia.²⁹ One group of 55 trained cadres were dispersed upon arrival in the South to reinforce the inter-province committees, with 15 cadres being assigned to eastern Nam Bo, 20 to central Nam Bo and 20 to western Nam Bo.³⁰

The purpose of all this activity was made clear when, amid reports that the Communists had established a general staff for overseeing operations in western Nam Bo,³¹ it

²⁷ "From a conversation between an agent of the government of Vietnam [i.e. RVN] and a North Vietnamese [i.e. Communist Party cadre] who had good contacts among political groups in North and South Vietnam", Working Paper, Appendices, Item 21, p.1; and "[Intelligence report of] Viet Minh collaboration with the Hoa Hao and penetration of the Cao Dai and agricultural organizations in the Plaine des Joncs, October 1955", *ibid.*, Item 205, pp.1-2.

²⁸ Working Paper, Appendices, Item 21, pp.1-2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Working Paper, Appendices, Item 205, pp.1-2.

³¹ Voice of the Dai Viet National Liberation Troops in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 2300 GMT, October 9, 1955.

was announced that elements of Ba Cut's Hoa Hao armed forces had linked up with "Viet Minh resistance veterans" to form a Mat Tran Quoc Gia Giai Phong Viet-Nam or, the National Liberation Front of Viet-Nam.³² Ba Cut's proclamation of October 10, announcing the formation of this Front, stated:

Following the ceasefire between the Viet Minh and the French, many people in the Viet Minh ranks did not want to regroup in the North. Most of them stayed in the South because of their attachment to their native villages and families.... Because of the terrorism of Ngo Dinh Diem which has lasted for more than a year, nearly 30,000 compatriots were either arrested, imprisoned or deported. We are for the union of all people without discrimination with regard to political tendencies or religion. We appeal to the compatriots to forget all their personal interests. We are ready to protect all the combatants and cadres who formerly participated in the resistance, and who want to achieve the independence and unification of Vietnam. For ten years, despite differences in our political tendencies, we have been united in the desire to liberate the country.³³

At this very moment, the battlefield lull which had settled over western Nam Bo since the Hoa Hao - National Army confrontations (May-July) was shattered by a Hoa Hao (Ba Cut) "counter-offensive" in the vicinity of Tri Ton in the triprovince area of Long Xuyen, Chau Doc and Rach Gia. This activity, as subsequent events were to indicate, was intended to disrupt Diem's October 23rd referendum.

³² Ibid., 0500 GMT, October 18, 1955.

³³ Ibid.

During October 15-17 the Nam Bo Regional Committee reportedly convened a conference in the Cai Fang area of Ca Mau province to discuss, among other things, the formation of a Fatherland Front organization in the South.³⁴ Representatives of the various sect groups were invited and it seems that Tran Van Soai and Ba Cut obliged. Tran Van Tra's proposal for a joint "Viet Minh-Hoa Hao" military and political command for the Dong Thap Muoi (Plaine des Joncs) region was accepted and planning begun. According to one report the Nam Bo Committee may have pledged to contribute one regiment of soldiers for use in joint operations against the National Army.³⁵

At the same time letters were issued to the President of the U.S., the Prime Minister of Britain and the President of France on behalf of the Hoa Hao forces.³⁶ They were obviously designed to undermine Diem's referendum as they offered suggestions as to how the current crisis might better be solved. Four proposals were made: (1) creation of a National Council with legislative powers, (2) formation of a government of National Union, (3) release of all political prisoners and (4) the promise to maintain security until the formation of the National Council.

Nevertheless Diem proceeded with his plans. Before announcing the date for the referendum on October 9th he

³⁴ Working Paper, Appendices, Item 205, pp.1-2.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Voice of the Dai Viet National Liberation Troops in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 0500 GMT, October 29, 1955.

instructed Cao Dai General Nguyen Thanh Phuong to seize Tay Ninh city. As we have already mentioned, Pope Pham Cong Tac's Papal Guard was seized and Tac himself placed under house arrest. If the Cao Dai Pope had indeed been watching "for his moment" this preemptive move by Gen. Phuong kept the bulk of the Cao Dai armed forces on side. Only one group, the Lien Minh Cao Dai, a force loyal to the late Trinh Minh The, broke away.³⁷ It did not respond to the overtures of the VWP's southern leaders and consequently found itself under Hoa Hao (Ba Cut) military pressure. On the eve of the referendum Lien Minh Cao Dai units were forced to retreat from positions they had taken up in the eastern sector of the Dong Thap Muoi.³⁸

Further south, in Ca Mau, Diemist forces again raided the "Holy See" of the Minh Chon Dau sect arresting 32 of its dignitaries.³⁹ These raids were part of a country-wide pattern of arrests and detention by the Diem government to minimize the threat of disruption to the referendum. They were later denounced by Bao Dai.⁴⁰

It is difficult to assess just what the Communists' intentions were regarding the referendum. Rumours abounded that they would oppose the ballot by organizing a boycott, by defacing the ballots or by urging people to vote for

³⁷ Working Paper, Appendices, Item 205, p.1.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Vietnam News Agency in Vietnamese morse to Vietnam, 0932 GMT, December 14, 1955.

⁴⁰ Buttinger, A Dragon Embattled, op.cit., Vol.2, p.892.

Bao Dai. Party histories of this period merely record that struggle movements were conducted against the referendum.⁴¹ On voting day a widespread series of minor incidents were reported: shellings of polling places, grenades tossed into crowds of voters, polling booths burned, etc. The worst incidents were reported in Cao Lanh, Sa Dec and Ben Tre, where the Hoa Hao forces of Tran Van Soai and Ba Cut were said to have been responsible. According to The Economist, "In view of the great efforts made by the Viet Minh to organise a boycott of the referendum, the fact that the percentage of abstentions were minimal amounted to a powerful rebuff to the Communists".⁴² This may have been so, but there was considerable suspicion, not unfounded, that the final results had been falsified.⁴³ In this case, the reported results would have papered over whatever strength the opposition alliance had demonstrated. One French observer, in fact credited the notable abstentions in western Nam Bo to the newly concluded alliance between the Viet Minh [i.e. VWP] and Hoa Hao.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Tinh Hinh Phong Trao, p.3.

⁴² "Vietnam Courts London", The Economist (November 26, 1955), Vol.177, No.5857, p.735.

⁴³ Colonel Melvin Hall, "The Dragons Lash Their Tails in Indo-China", Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society (April 1956), Vol.XLIII, Part II, pp.113-120; John Osborne, "The Tough Miracle Man of Vietnam", Life (May 13, 1957), Vol.42, No.19, p.164; Lancaster, The Emancipation of French Indochina, op.cit., p.399; and Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, op.cit., p.257.

⁴⁴ Lucien Bodard dispatch from Saigon in France-Soir [Paris] (October 26, 1955).

According to the official results, as announced by the SVN Minister of the Interior:

The number of voters of both sexes who participated in the vote was 5,828,907. The number of voters deposing Bao Dai and naming Premier Ngo Dinh Diem as Chief of State was 5,721,735. The number of votes not to depose Bao Dai was 63,017. The number of persons who did not participate in the people's referendum was 131,395. The number of spoiled ballots was 44,155.⁴⁵

Three days later Diem declared Viet-Nam a Republic and was promptly recognized by the United States, France, Britain and some 40 additional states.

IV. SETTING UP THE FATHERLAND FRONT (November 1955 - February 1956)

The October 23rd referendum deposing Bao Dai and the October 26th declaration establishing a Republic of Viet-Nam mark a watershed in the development of non-Communist politics. These events were swiftly followed by Diem's denunciation of the December 1954 Franco-Vietnamese agreement on financial and economic matters, by the recall of Vietnamese representatives from the Assembly of the French Union in Paris and by the dissolution of the Revolutionary Committee. Clearly Ngo Dinh Diem had successfully weathered the challenges to his regime which had been so threatening only a few months before. The pro-French, non-Communist opposition ceased to remain a credible threat to Diem's authority.

⁴⁵ Voice of Free Vietnam in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 0305 GMT, October 26, 1955.

In order to further solidify his position and to demonstrate convincingly that the Republic of Viet-Nam (RVN) would not be bound by the political terms written into the 1954 Geneva Agreements, especially on the question of general elections, Diem took two major steps. Firstly, on November 28th he announced by means of a Presidential decree the formation of a Constitutional Committee on Elections. Secondly on January 19th, Diem informed the French that the continued presence of troops on Vietnamese soil was "incompatible with Viet-Nam's concept of full independence".⁴⁶ The first step signalled the RVN's movement towards the election of a National Assembly, and by extension, the drafting of a new Constitution for the Republic. The second step was designed to undermine France's ability to exert pressure on the RVN to participate in talks with the DRVN on general elections. It should be recalled that as a signatory to the 1954 Geneva Agreements France had certain responsibilities in this regard.⁴⁷ Diem calculated correctly that if he got the French troops out before July 1956 France would be in no position to take up its responsibility - an argument later advanced by France itself.

Simultaneously with Diem's political maneuvering, the VWP was also taking steps to improve its political position.

⁴⁶ Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, op.cit., p.319.

⁴⁷ Under the terms of Article 7 of the Final Declaration; for a general account see: Geoffrey Warner, "Interview with Monsieur NGUYEN HUU CHAU, Paris, 23 May 1973", typescript of interview notes, p.1. Chau was at that time (1954-55) Secretary of State to the RVN Presidency.

Over the course of November-December a major effort was undertaken to enlist as many opposition groups as possible behind the program of the Fatherland Front. One feature of this renewed effort was the return to the south of what must have totalled several hundred regroupees.⁴⁸ These returned cadres had undoubtedly been thoroughly trained in the Party's new united front line and their appearance on the scene signalled a renewed emphasis in building up a popular struggle movement whose objective was to secure North-South consultations and general elections. There is some evidence to suggest that senior VWP officials feared that reunification elections scheduled for July 1956 might not take place on time;⁴⁹ nevertheless it was still Party policy to bring about these elections. Accordingly a twin campaign was mounted. On the one hand the Party directed action against the RVN's Constituent Assembly elections scheduled for March; and on the other hand the Party mounted a propaganda campaign in favour of general elections by the July 1956 deadline.

⁴⁸ "Taken together, available evidence indicates that infiltration of regroupees from North to South Vietnam began as early as 1955. For example, a U.S. intelligence report of November 1955 reported on the arrival of 50 regroupees in October, 1955; and the Lieutenant Colonel mentioned above, an intelligence officer, described trips to South Vietnam and back in 1955, 1956, and 1958. However, from all indications, the early infiltration was quite small scale, involving no more than a few hundred persons in all". "Hanoi and the Insurgency in South Vietnam", in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5 Tab 3, p.34.

⁴⁹ Particularly after the results of Ho Chi Minh's trips to China and the Soviet Union in mid-1955 became known.

It was not until late November that the by-laws, program and manifesto of the Fatherland Front were sent south by the newly elected Central Committee of the Fatherland Front in Hanoi.⁵⁰ The organizational structure of the Front in the North was not duplicated in the South; it appears as if only a handful of southern leaders were charged with responsibility for Fatherland Front affairs.⁵¹ If the Party intended to fashion a mass organization in the South it was singularly unsuccessful. Unfortunately available evidence is mute on this point. We do know that an executive committee of the Fatherland Front (for Nam Bo) was formed in late December and its leaders were reported to be: Le Duan (president), Ba Cut and Tran Van Soai (vice presidents), Pham Ngoc Thuan, Tran Van Tra, Pham Hung, Phan Ngoc Tue, Nguyen Van Vinh and Huynh Tan Phat (members).⁵² The main purpose of this new Front was, as we have indicated earlier, threefold:

⁵⁰ Working Paper, Appendices, Item 12, p.2.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp.1-2.

⁵² "Interrogation of two Vietnamese Communist captives picked up in 1956 by GVN [i.e. RVN] forces", Working Paper, Appendices, Item 17, p.1; United States Central Intelligence Agency, Memorandum: The Organization, Activities, and Objectives of the Communist Front in South Vietnam (September 22, 1965 - SECRET), Appendices, p.A-18, which comments on Huynh Tan Phat. The latter document was located in Douglas Pike, compiler, Vietnam Reference Files (Taipei: United States Regional Information Office), File II (National Liberation Front -SVN- Subject File), Drawer NLF/BIOG. (National Liberation Front Biographical), Folder NLF/Biog.-I (National Liberation Front/Biographical-Leadership), which the author consulted in May 1972. The reference files, which are in the process of being placed on microfilm, have since been removed to Washington, D.C.

1. to struggle for the strict implementation of Geneva Agreements
2. to push forward the patriotic movement in the South
3. to widen and consolidate the National United Front throughout the country.

Yet the emphasis on alliance with the sects and Party support (training and material) for their military activity seems contradictory at first glance. One Party member of the Vinh Long province committee for propaganda and training has stated that the VWP's main objective "was to struggle to bring about general elections and reunite the country, by means of political action, rather than through the use of armed force".⁵³ But on December 3, 1955, it was reported, Gen. Tran Quang was appointed chief of "Viet Minh" forces in Nam Bo replacing Nguyen Van Tay. Gen. Quang's duties were to upgrade Party-led units to regimental size.⁵⁴ In eastern Nam Bo "Viet Minh" Battalions 307, 309, 311 and 410 were ordered to reassemble in the Dong Thap Muoi for this reorganization.

Gen. Quang's appointment had been preceded by various reports that a large delegation of senior Party officials (perhaps 100 men), led by Van Tien Dung, had held a meeting with Ba Cut in the Go Bac Chien area of the Dong

⁵³ Working Paper, Appendices, Item 12.

⁵⁴ "Interrogation of a Viet Minh cadre who deserted in 1956 and turned himself in to South Vietnamese [i.e. RVN] authorities", Working Paper, Appendices, Item 16; and "Report of an informant who was employed by the South Vietnamese [i.e. RVN] Security Service and in contact with a Viet Minh cadre from the Rach Gia area", *ibid.*, Item 25-A.

Thap Muoi.⁵⁵ At this time a reorganization of Hoa Hao forces was suggested in light of increasing contact between these forces and ARVN units. General Dung was said to be overseeing the formation of one regiment composed of stay-behind Viet Minh veterans as well as recruits from among Viet Minh forces previously stationed in Laos and Cambodia.⁵⁶ Small numbers of regrouped cadres from the DRVN were also reported involved in this reorganization.⁵⁷ This new unit,

⁵⁵ "Intelligence summary based on the reports of various informants who worked for the South Vietnamese [i.e. RVN] Security Service in 1956", *ibid.*, Item 22.

⁵⁶ For reports on regroupes from Cambodia see: Voice of the Dai Viet National Liberation Troops in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 0500 GMT, November 1, 1955; for reports on regroupes from Laos see: Lucien Bodard dispatch from Hong Kong in France-Soir (December 29, 1955). Various reports on the fighting in the vicinity of Voeune Sai in Stung Treng province in Cambodia's northeast in August of 1955 mentioned the participation of "Viet Minh"; see: Saigon Radio in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 2300 GMT, August 22, 1955; Radio Phnom Penh, Cambodian Home Service in French, 2330 GMT, August 30, 1955; and Radio Vientiane, Laotian Home Service in Lao, 1145 GMT, August 30, 1955. Complaints by the Cambodian Government were investigated by the International Commission for Supervision and Control. The ICC was able to uncover no more incriminating evidence than "a Viet Minh area organizer" operating in the region, see: Fourth Interim Report of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Cambodia for the Period 1 April to 30 September 1955, Cambodia No.1 (1956), Command Paper Cmd. 9671 (London: H.M.S.O., January 1956), pp.18-20. It is known that "Khmer-Viet Minh" forces retained their bases in Cambodia after July 1954, see: Norodom Sihanouk and Wilfred Burchett, My War With the C.I.A.: Cambodia's Fight for Survival (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), p.151; Interview with Phan The Ngoc, Saigon, Ministry of Open Arms, June 8, 1972. Ngoc served in Cambodia during this period. For a general account of Party activity see: Roger M. Smith, Cambodia's Foreign Policy (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965), pp.167-168.

⁵⁷ Working Paper, Appendices, Item 22; see footnote 48 above.

led by Muoi Tri, was to coordinate action with Hoa Hao units. Muoi Tri was eminently suitable for this assignment as he had had experience with both the Hoa Hao and Binh Xuyen armed forces dating back to the Second World War.⁵⁸

At the same time remnants of the Binh Xuyen had managed to regroup in northern Bien Hoa province and representatives of a force numbering up to 2,000 made contact with VWP officials. According to a later Party history:

Diem employed regular, montagnard and Cao Dai forces to fight the Binh Xuyen force and pursued this force to the Rung Sat. Finally it was annihilated. There was only one small element left. This element has always maintained contact with our forces.⁵⁹

It is likely that this group was led by Vo Van Mon (Bay Mon), a person who achieved prominence in later years.

The apparent contradiction between the Party's emphasis on peaceful struggle and its alliances with the various sect armed forces can be explained in this way: during the months of August 1955 to March 1956 the countryside of southern Viet-Nam was plunged into chaos as various sect forces battled with Diemist military units and, in some cases, with each other. The major opponents of Diem's rule were the Hoa Hao forces led by Tran Van Soai and Ba Cut as well

⁵⁸ Ibid.; Voice of the Dai Viet National Liberation Troops in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 0500 GMT, November 2, 1955; for background information on Muoi Tri (also known as Huynh Van Tri and Huynh Van Chi) see: Warner, The Last Confucian, op.cit., p.108; and Hilaire du Berrier, Background to Betrayal: The Tragedy of Vietnam (Boston: Western Islands Press, 1965), pp.56-58. For an official biography consult: Who's Who of the Republic of South Viet-Nam (South Vietnam: Giai Phong Editions, 1969), p.47.

⁵⁹ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.5.

as units of the Binh Xuyen. In addition, certain units of the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai which had declared their loyalty to Diem balked at integration or demobilization procedures agreed to earlier. Some returned momentarily to armed dissidence. Such appears to have been the case in November when fighting erupted between Hoa Hao units nominally under the control of Lam Thanh Nguyen and the ARVN in the vicinity of Cai Lay in My Tho province.⁶⁰ A unit of 500 men composing the Lien Minh Cao Dai ensconced themselves in the Duong Minh Chau maquis of western Tay Ninh province and refused to obey the commands of Gen. Nguyen Thanh Phuong. As the fighting continued organized units were broken up and scattered about the countryside. Some abandoned political objectives and took to banditry; other units sought refuge in the inaccessible Viet Minh resistance base areas. A later history⁶¹ of this period provides a graphic description of how the sects and communists were thrown together and put on the defensive:

Diem applied a similar policy towards the armed forces of the Binh Xuyen sect in Saigon, the Cao Dai in Tay Ninh and the Hoa Hao in the Mekong delta. They resisted Diem's onslaughts. Bloody battles erupted, especially in Saigon in early 1955. After being driven out of their bases, the Binh Xuyen, Cao Dai and Hoa Hao (commonly known as 'opposition religious sects') took refuge in the countryside. There they met some of the patriots and former resistance members who had also fled from the ruthless repression of Ngo Dinh Diem. Although the two sides had

⁶⁰ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1000 GMT, November 24, 1955; and Voice of Vietnam in French to Southeast Asia, 2330 GMT, November 23, 1955.

⁶¹ Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet Nam", op.cit., p.21.

been adversaries in the past the patriots and former resistance members showed the leaders of the opposition religious sects how to survive: to rely on the people's support and return to the former resistance bases to organize a protracted struggle.

ARVN military action against the sects was accompanied by various political measures against the Communist organization. At the same time as the sects retreated into the resistance base areas, the RVN was moving into the third and most effective stage of its anti-Communist Denunciation Campaign. The account cited immediately above provides keen insight into this episode:

The brutality of the Diem regime went beyond the calculations of the patriots and former resistance cadres. They were faced with a decisive choice, either to limit themselves to peaceful methods of struggle, expressed in purely political forms, and continue to be wiped out in the bloodbath of the white terror, or to combine political struggle with taking the most effective measures of self defense. The situation allowed no further hesitation and guided by their long experience in combating the oppressors, they chose the second path.

From times immemorial, there has always been some form of self-defense organization of the masses in the Vietnamese countryside: the 'tuan dinh' (patrol groups) in the feudal times, the 'dan trang' (militia) in the French colonial days, and the militia and guerrilla units in the anti-French resistance. Carrying forward these traditions, able-bodied young men were organized to resist Diem's terror. Thus, the first self-defense teams were gradually formed in the villages, grouping a dozen or score of young men in some places and from 30 to 40 in others. They stayed in their villages like the other peasants, working the fields and taking part in political struggles. They armed themselves with everything they could in order to defend the people in their work in the field or during demonstrations. The more the enemy intensified its acts of terror, the more rapidly the self-defense teams grew, especially in the Mekong delta where everyday a most bitter confrontation took place.

From the end of 1955 to 1956, as Diem stepped up his 'denounce the Communists' campaign, the hunt for patriots and former resistance members became fiercer. Finding it impossible to live and carry

on the political struggle in the countryside the latter fled to former resistance bases such as the Plain of Reeds (southwest of Saigon), the U Minh jungle (between Bac Lieu and Rach Gia provinces on the Gulf of Thailand) or Resistance Zones D and C (north and northeast of Saigon). Diem sent his troops after them. Cornered, they had to organize self-defense together with the local population. In their first fight for survival the first units of the Liberation Army took shape, one or two companies in strength in some places and a battalion in others....

A number of former members of the resistance who had returned to the cities to resume a normal life were also persecuted and finally had to leave. All these men rallied together, formed armed units and occupied some areas to organize resistance against the Diem forces such as Lai Thieu and Gia Dinh province, or the mountain region in Rach Gia province. First created on the local populations' own initiative, they later managed to establish contact with the people's armed forces which provided them with command. (emphasis added)

The months of October 1955 to March 1956 mark only the beginning of this process. At this time the Party continued to implement the instructions it had received in September permitting the use of armed self-defence with the political struggle movement. Various resistance base areas in the central highlands, in the Trung Nam area of Quang Nam province, in the U Minh region and in War Zone C were reorganized.⁶² Wartime "factories" and workshops began functioning once again, resuming production of a limited

⁶² Voice of the Dai Viet National Liberation Troops in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 2300 GMT, October 2, 1955; 0500 GMT, November 2, 1955; 2300 GMT, November 12, 1955; 0500 GMT, November 16, 1955; 0500 GMT, November 28, 1955; 0500 GMT, December 20, 1955; and Voice of the National Army (Saigon) in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 1115 GMT, January 19, 1956.

supply of mines, grenades and ammunition.⁶³ Buried arms caches were dug up and arms distributed to the reactivated village self-defence groups mentioned above. Trenches and other defence systems were erected to protect the population from the ensuing conflict. A few detachments of so-called Tan Viet Minh (new Viet Minh) began operations with their various Hoa Hao counterparts under the banner of "lien minh hoa binh" or "peace alliance" and elsewhere Party cadres directed the training of sect forces.⁶⁴

Not all of the Party-sect military activity was defensive in nature. There appears to have been a deliberate policy to disrupt the economic connections between Saigon and the countryside. Specifically attempts were made to siphon off the 10th month rice crop and to block it from

⁶³ Voice of the Dai Viet National Liberation Troops in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 2300 GMT, November 12, 1955; 0500 GMT, November 16, 1955; and 0500 GMT, November 28, 1955. "The High Counsellor affirmed that the Viet Minh had left camps and dumps with a view to reinstalling its administration in this zone and reasserting its control over the population. He drew attention to the discovery, on 30 December 1955, of two major armaments and munitions factories about 50 kms. north-west of Kompong Speu. 'Other camps which remain to be uncovered and destroyed certainly exist', H.E. Khim Tit wrote". In "Le danger Khmer-Vietminh vu il y au douze ans par S.E. Khim Tit", Realities Cambodgiennes [Phnom Penh] (February 16, 1968), p.21. There was nothing in Khim Tit's report to indicate that these sites were actually in use. Confirmation on the revival in production comes from Phan The Ngoc, a Party cadre who served in Cambodia at the time. Interview with Phan The Ngoc, Saigon, Ministry of Open Arms, June 8, 1972.

⁶⁴ Voice of the Dai Viet National Liberation Troops in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 0500 GMT, November 2, 1955; and 2300 GMT, November 12, 1955.

reaching Saigon. Some of the rice was diverted to Cambodia where earnings from its sale were used to finance the purchase of military supplies. Smaller amounts of rice were even shipped to the North⁶⁵ which was experiencing severe shortages at that time.

Covert Party agents directed their attention at penetrating all branches of the RVN's rural administrative apparatus. Specific targets included village councils and guard units, ARVN military posts in western Nam Bo, the police and security services as well as the Ministry of Information.⁶⁶ Other reports at about the same time remarked upon the growing Communist influence in the cities where information and propaganda committees were playing an important role in publicizing the program of the Fatherland Front.⁶⁷

The Party also directed its energies at sabotaging the RVN's newly launched civic action program and refugee resettlement efforts especially in the Cai Son area of

⁶⁵ Vietnam Press (Saigon), "Seizure of a Junk of Rice", The Times of Viet Nam (April 21, 1956), No.14, p.5; and Vietnam Press, "North Bound Junk Seized", ibid., (May 19, 1956), No.18, p.2.

⁶⁶ Voice of the Dai Viet National Liberation Troops in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 0500 GMT, November 16, 1955; 2300 GMT, December 6, 1955; and 0500 GMT, December 20, 1955. United States Department of State, Office of Intelligence Research, Intelligence Brief (February 7, 1956) in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 10, p.1049, states, "the Communists presumably tried to penetrate all branches of the Government. The most frequent reports suggest heavy penetration of the Information Ministry".

⁶⁷ Voice of the Dai Viet National Liberation Troops in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 0500 GMT, November 2, 1955; 0500 GMT, November 28, 1955; and 0500 GMT, November 29, 1955.

western Nam Bo. Alleged RVN corruption was also made an issue. However, as a later Party critique of this political struggle movement made clear, "The struggles stressed political slogans demanding a general election" rather than "slogans of social welfare".⁶⁸ It was not until mid-1956 that this emphasis was changed.

Despite this rather long catalogue of Party actions it must be stressed that they ran into difficulties and were only partly successful. In November, for example, American intelligence was privy to captured reports from Party field operations which contained pessimistic forecasts for the future. These reports acknowledged that the struggle could be "long, painful and complex" and that "it is not time ... to meet the enemy".⁶⁹

During January and February the opposition alliance against Diem began to suffer irreparable reverses. In December Diem concentrated elements of 3 ARVN divisions totalling 10 battalions in the Rach Gia, Long Xuyen, Chau Doc area with the purpose of attacking the combined Hoa Hao forces of Tran Van Soai and Ba Cut. He also announced a plan to settle 100,000 refugees (mostly regroupees from the north) in Long Xuyen, an area regarded as a Hoa Hao stronghold. Early skirmishing between these forces soon gave way to a general offensive as ARVN Gen. Duong Van Minh, fresh from his success against the Binh Xuyen, launched

⁶⁸ Tinh Hinh Phong Trao, p.4.

⁶⁹ United States Central Intelligence Agency, Current Intelligence Weekly Review (November 10, 1955) in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab 3, p.45.

Operation Nguyen Hue. This military action wore on until after the March 7th Constituent Assembly elections when Gen. Minh declared western Nam Bo pacified.

In mid-February Tran Van Soai opened negotiations with RVN officials which resulted later that same month in his defection to the RVN. Despite attempts to thwart this 4,600 Hoa Hao troops followed their leader.⁷⁰ Soai's maneuver greatly weakened Ba Cut's position as the latter's forces now bore the brunt of ARVN attention.

Also in January the ARVN launched attacks upon the break-away Lien Minh Cao Dai forces. These operations, conducted in Tay Ninh province, were also used as a pretext for asserting Diem's authority over the largest of the Cao Dai sects. Although Pham Cong Tac had been placed under house arrest by Gen. Nguyen Thanh Phuong, Phuong himself resisted ARVN attempts to assert control over the province. After a few clashes RVN officials were able to announce on February 19 that ARVN troops had occupied the provincial capital and the seat of the Cao Dai sect. Thereafter Cao Dai units were either demobilized or retrained and reassigned to other regions in South Viet-Nam. On March 18 Diem journeyed to Tay Ninh city to accept the surrender of Cao Dai forces, thus marking for the time being the end of their threat to his rule. Unhappily for Diem, however, amid the confusion of February Pope Pham

⁷⁰ Working Paper, Appendices, Item 17; MacAlister, "The Great Gamble", op.cit., p.122; and Murti, Vietnam Divided, op.cit., p.136, footnote 13.

Cong Tac had managed to slip across the border into Cambodia and to link up with opponents of the Saigon government.⁷¹

The demise of Ba Cut's Hoa Hao units swiftly followed that of Tran Van Soai and the Cao Dai. In April Ba Cut found himself engaged in a fierce battle around the Cai San area. He was captured on the 13th and eventually beheaded. By mid-1956 a U.S. National Intelligence Estimate could observe, "All significant sect resistance in South Vietnam has been eliminated".⁷²

It is no wonder that in the midst of all this turmoil that Le Duan was reported to have lost faith with the Party's self-imposed restraints on the use of military force. By the end of 1955 he was reported to have urged the Central Committee to forcibly overthrow the Diem government as quickly as possible.⁷³ At the height of the fighting in February he conferred with his colleagues on tactics to be pursued in future. Once again he stated his view that

⁷¹ On February 22, 1956, it was reported, a meeting of anti-Diemists took place in Cambodia which was attended by Ba Cut, Le Van Vien, Nguyen Phuc Hau, Nguyen Dai Thang (of the Binh Xuyen) and forty-six others; see: Vietnam News Agency in Vietnamese morse to Vietnam, 0950 GMT, February 23, 1956; and Voice of the Dai Viet National Liberation Troops, 0500 GMT, February 26, 1956.

⁷² U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Probable Developments in North and South Vietnam Through Mid-1957, National Intelligence Estimate (July 17, 1956), NIE No.63-56 in United States-Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 10, p.1067.

⁷³ U.S. Central Intelligence Agency report from Singapore, CS-82270 (January 16, 1956) cited in *ibid.*, Book 2, IV.A.5., Tab 3, pp.48-49. "CS" may stand for "covert station" or "covert source".

military action was necessary if Viet Nam was to be reunified and that bases would have to be prepared in the Central Highlands to support such a policy.⁷⁴

Sometime in mid-March, after Tran Van Soai had rallied and the military balance turned in Diem's favour, and after the March 4th elections had been successfully held, the Nam Bo Regional Committee held a post-mortem. It was obvious that the campaign to boycott and disrupt the elections had failed. According to one observer "The inability of the Communists to prevent a large turnout of voters was another illustration of the growing strength of the Diem regime".⁷⁵

According to a document captured by RVN authorities, Le Duan addressed a meeting on March 18th and was quoted as saying:

Our political struggle in the South will sometimes have to be backed up with military action in order to show the strength of the forces which won at Dien Bien Phu. With political and military activities properly carried out, we will surely defeat the enemy [Tran Trung] Dung and Diem; and the population will cooperate with us. The population ascribed the defeat of the Binh Xuyen and the Hoa Hao to military causes, but the population realized that it was because our troops had to move to the north that Diem's forces were able to occupy the west. Therefore, we should increase our forces in the South and develop military action.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ "Hanoi and the Insurgency in South Vietnam", *ibid.*, p.49.

⁷⁵ MacAlister, "The Great Gamble", *op.cit.*, p.169.

⁷⁶ "Document purportedly issued by Lao Dong Party Central Committee for Guidance of Cadres in GVN [i.e. RVN] Zone", Working Paper, Appendices, Item 204.

The document made clear that "(a)lthough England, Russia, France, China and India are trying to arrange a second Geneva Conference to solve the problem of Vietnam [i.e., the North will have to make plans to solve the military, political and economic problems of the South]. Military activity is considered most important in SVN now".

Another document revealed that as a result of ~~the~~ Le Duan's remarks the Nam Bo Regional Committee adopted a draft 14-point plan of action.⁷⁷ These points can be summarized as follows:

1. Military action should be used in support of other activities.
2. At least two support bases should be created to aid activities in Cambodia and in the Central Highlands.
3. Nam Bo and Cambodia, although separate countries, are part of the same battlefront, therefore budgetary assistance should be increased and senior cadres should be seconded to Cambodia.
4. The Highlands should be consolidated as a base.
5. The number of battalions should be increased from the present 14 to 20. One or two companies should be assigned to each district and 1 to 3 guerrilla squads to each village. Party members who are fit for guerrilla service and refuse will be expelled.
6. Village militia and self-defence groups are to be given military and political training by provincial military commanders.
7. Supplies are to be stockpiled according to the needs of local forces.

⁷⁷ These points were compiled from: "Translation of a document found on the person of a political officer with Communist forces in Zone 9 of the Western Interzone on Nov. 27, 1956", Working Paper, Appendices, Item 19; and ibid., Item 204.

8. Consolidate the military organizations in the western interzone of Nam Bo.
9. Consolidate the military organizations in the eastern interzone of Nam Bo.
10. Consolidate the military organizations in the central interzone of Nam Bo.
11. Consolidate the leading organizations in the Saigon-Cholon special zone.
12. Consolidate the leading organizations in Cambodia.
13. Tighten relations with pro-French and anti-Diem elements to form a United National Front.
14. Strengthen the Movement for the Protection of Peace.

This new plan of action was forwarded to the VWP Central Committee with the request that the over-all tactics in Nam Bo be changed to permit a more effective exploitation of the current situation. Specifically it was suggested that Party military forces be used in conjunction with (although subordinated to) a struggle movement organized around economic issues during the forthcoming rainy season (May-October/November).⁷⁸

In response VWP leaders in the North stressed the exploitation of agrarian issues until a longer-range strategy could be worked out.⁷⁹ In approving some of the March proposals of the Nam Bo Regional Committee, the Central Committee ordered that this new tactical approach should be conducted under the slogan, "Liberate South Viet Nam through

⁷⁸ Ibid., Item 31.

⁷⁹ William S. Turley, "Army, Party and Society in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam: Civil-Military Relations in a Mass-Mobilization System", Ph.D. Thesis, the University of Washington, 1972, pp.122-123.

its fields!"⁸⁰ In early April senior Party officials in Nam Bo convened a special conference.⁸¹ In light of these instructions they agreed on two propositions:

1. that the policy of using violence through the medium of the sect armed forces, initiated in September 1955, had not achieved satisfactory results.
2. From the standpoint of the DRVN's international diplomacy the situation, especially in Nam Bo, did not favour the continuance of violence.

Le Duan accordingly instructed those present on the content of the new political struggle movement based on agrarian issues.⁸² On the political aspects of this movement Le Duan instructed the cadres to fulfil these tasks:

1. develop support in the villages for the purpose of gaining control of local administrative committees.
2. popularize the themes of the Fatherland Front and win over the rich farmers and landowners.
3. organize rural youth groups as the base for their recruitment into "popular forces" as needed.

Le Duan also issued instructions that secret grain storage areas should be prepared for use when food is scarce and that peasants should be urged not to sell their paddy to the Saigon government. Le Toan Tu, a senior Party cadre, was put in charge of organizing the new agrarian struggle over the next three months (May-June-July) with the purpose of building up an "all-out struggle for peace" by the deadline

⁸⁰ Working Paper, Appendices, Item 30.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

for general elections. Various intelligence organs were instructed to launch diversionary actions in the cities and towns so as to keep RVN security officials occupied well away from the countryside.

The conference also issued instructions to lower echelons recommending that they abandon so-called "illegal activities" (holding demonstrations, distributing tracts, hanging banderoles etc.) and adopt instead "legal" methods. The purpose was to avoid incurring RVN repression. "Terrorism" (the elimination of "wicked tyrants") was also prohibited at this time.⁸³

V. EXTERNAL FACTORS - THE DRVN'S QUEST FOR SUPPORT
(August 1955 - April 1956)

A. Economic Problems in the North

On March 31st it was announced that the Politburo of the VWP had met recently to discuss the reports on the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) by its two delegates, Truong Chinh and Le Duc Tho, and had decided to call an enlarged conference of the Central Committee to discuss this issue.⁸⁴ In the interval between this announcement and the convening of the 9th Plenum on April 19th, A.I. Mikoyan, a deputy premier of the Soviet

⁸³ Ibid., Appendices, Item 12; Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.22.

⁸⁴ "Communique of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Viet-Nam Labor Party", Voice of Vietnam at dictation speed in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0015 GMT, March 31, 1956. The Vietnamese-language original is missing from the microfilm collection of Nhan Dan which this author consulted at the National Library of Australia in Canberra.

Council of Ministers, paid a short visit to Hanoi. Both these events were to have a great impact on the deliberations of the VWP's Central Committee as it considered, among other things, events in the South. Before turning to a discussion of the 9th Plenum it is necessary to mention both the state of North Viet-Nam's domestic economy as well as the DRVN's diplomatic efforts to secure the implementation of the political provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreements.

Both the 8th Plenum of the VWP (August 13-20 1955) and the 5th session of the National Assembly (September 15-20) discussed and announced decisions on the economic situation. According to the communique of the 8th plenum:

in the consolidation of North Vietnam, due importance must be attached to economic rehabilitation. The land reform must be completed according to schedule and efforts must be made to develop production, with the increase in farm production as the main objective.⁸⁵ (emphasis added)

According to Pham Van Dong, in his report to the National Assembly, "economic rehabilitation constitutes the base for the whole work of the consolidation of North Vietnam".

(emphasis added). Later in his report Dong was more specific about the "aims and requirements of economic rehabilitation":

to fulfil the two year program of economic rehabilitation mainly aimed at raising the production level to that of the pre-war period in order to heal the war wounds, lessen the difficulties of the people, gradually improve the material and moral life of the people, and thereby create a base for the consolidation of

⁸⁵ "Thong Cao cua Hoi Nghi Lan Thu 8 cua Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Lao Dong Viet-Nam", [Communique of the 8th session of the Central Executive Committee of the Viet-Nam Workers' Party] Nhan Dan (August 22, 1955), No.537, p.1.

North Vietnam from the economic, political, and national defense points of view with adequate attention to be paid to South Vietnam, and foundations to be laid for future planned economic development.⁸⁶

In late December the DRVN Council of Ministers approved the State Plan for 1956 which also gave stress "to restoring the national economy to pre-war levels".⁸⁷ Later Nguyen Van Tran, the vice-chairman of the National Planning Commission, provided a full outline of the 1956 State Plan and his summary laid particular emphasis on increasing food production "as the most centrally important question".⁸⁸

In fact North Viet-Nam was in very serious economic strife. One contemporary American analysis asserted that "as a result of wartime damage to irrigation facilities and an unprecedented series of floods, droughts, and insect scourges, the rice deficit in each of the past two years [1954-55] has amounted to at least 500,000 metric tons".⁸⁹ Ho Chi Minh in his report to the National Assembly characteristically went to the point, "Our people must also show proof of emulation in favor of an increase of production, save from all points of view, especially agricultural

⁸⁶ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0528 GMT, September 17, 1955.

⁸⁷ "Thong Cao cua Hoi Dong Chinh Phu ve 'Ke Hoach Nha Nuoc 1956' cua Nuoc Viet Nam Dan Chu Cong Hoa", [Communique of the Government Council of Ministers Concerning 'The 1956 State Plan'] Nhan Dan (December 31, 1955), No.668, p.1.

⁸⁸ Vietnam News Agency in Vietnamese morse to Vietnam, 0845 GMT, January 17, 1955.

⁸⁹ U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Probable Developments in North and South Vietnam Through Mid-1957 (July 17, 1956), NIE No.63-56, op.cit., p.1069.

production to avert the danger of famine and to provide a food reserve"⁹⁰ (emphasis added). The solution to this perennial problem lay in two directions: carrying out a thorough-going agrarian reform at home and seeking assistance from abroad. In November 1955 the VWP Secretary-General, Truong Chinh announced that the 5th wave of mass mobilization for land reform had begun. The purpose of the land reform was basically two-fold: (1) to change the nature of rural authority by making the supporters of the revolution, the poor and landless peasants, owners of their own land (and by displacing the influence of landlords and rich peasants by redistributing their land), (2) and thereby increase total production.

External aid to the DRVN came mainly from two sources: Russia and China. As a result of agreement between Hanoi and Moscow, the Soviets bought and shipped rice from Burma to North Viet-Nam. One report stated that by the end of 1955, 150,000 tons of Burmese rice should have reached Hanoi.⁹¹ This was reckoned to be 50,000 tons more than the usual deficit.

The American analysis mentioned above stated that "imports through April 1956 consisting of token shipments from Communist China and some 200,000 tons of Burmese rice purchased by the USSR, have fallen far short of the minimum

⁹⁰ "Bao Cao cua Ho Chu Tich Truoc Quoc Hoi", [Speech by Chairman Ho before the National Assembly] Nhan Dan (September 21, 1955), No.567, p.1.

⁹¹ "Ho Gets Burmese Rice", op.cit., p.1022.

requirements".⁹² It was expected however that the situation would improve in 1956-57 as the USSR had agreed to purchase 400,000 tons of Burmese rice each year through 1959.

There were other problems concerned with rehabilitating North Viet-Nam's economy, but these need not concern us. The point being that at the time of the 9th Plenum in April 1956 North Viet-Nam was still preoccupied with domestic matters which took precedence over developments in the South. It seems that as early as September 1955 there was even some criticism that too much attention was being paid to the North at the expense of developments in the South. Witness these words by Ho Chi Minh,

The work of building up a peaceful, united, independent, democratic and strong Vietnam can certainly be carried out. Concerning this I would like to answer one question: Even though we are determined not to neglect the demands of the North while paying attention to the south, why do we strive to consolidate the North in order to be able to pay attention to the South?

The reason is very simple; as I had occasion to say before the Congress of the Fatherland Front: for a new house to be stable it must have a firm foundation; for a new plant to grow, it must have strong roots. The North is the foundation, the roots of the struggle forces of our entire people, that is why we must make the roots really firm, really strong.⁹³

⁹² U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Probable Developments in North and South Vietnam Through Mid-1957 (July 17, 1956), NIE No.63-56, op.cit., p.1069.

⁹³ "Bao Cao cua Ho Chu Tich Truoc Quoc Hoi", op.cit.

B. The Geneva Agreements: Problems of Implementation

The DRVN's efforts to secure the implementation of the political provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreements were unsuccessful, mainly due to the lack of leverage which North Viet-Nam could exert on either of her two main allies, Russia and China, or on France.

The details of the DRVN's public maneuvering on the question of consultations and general elections has been admirably drawn together elsewhere,⁹⁴ and it will not be necessary to repeat this history here. Of interest to us is the emerging pattern of Soviet and French indifference to assuming their various responsibilities as co-chairman and signatory, respectively of the 1954-Geneva Agreements.

It has been suggested that Soviet indifference towards securing Viet-Nam's unity arose out of a conflict of interest with the DRVN. Specifically, Russia was prepared to concede the maintenance of the existing division of Viet-Nam and Korea as a tacit quid pro quo for the continued division of Germany. According to Brian Crozier:

The new Communist policy reached its natural conclusion at the local level in September 1955, when the World Communist 'line' for divided countries (already accepted for Germany and Korea) was officially adopted for Vietnam as well. The governing principle of this 'line' is that the reunification of a divided country is a matter to be decided between the governments of both sections of the country - a policy which

⁹⁴ Weinstein, Vietnam's Unheld Elections, op.cit.; SarDesai, Indian Foreign Policy, op.cit., pp.75-116; and Fifield, The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia, op.cit., pp.293-344.

in Germany, the most important of divided countries, offers the advantage of avoiding free general elections in which the Communist-controlled section might lose its identity.⁹⁵

If Crozier is correct, this most certainly explains the Soviet posture of providing public support - however limited - for the DRVN, while in private, in its capacity as one of the Geneva Conference co-chairmen, refusing to advance the DRVN's case. The following examples will illustrate this point.

In the face of Diem's refusal to hold consultations with the North (which received American backing), Pham Van Dong, on August 17th addressed a note to the Geneva Conference co-chairman (Eden and Molotov) asking them "to take all necessary measures" to ensure that a consultative conference was convened.⁹⁶ On September 20th Britain circulated this note to all the Conference participants. Soviet comment on this note came four days later when Molotov addressed a session of the United Nations General Assembly. His remarks on Viet-Nam were buried in the fourth section of a six-section speech. Section IV, headed "Unsettled Problems of Asia and the Far East", included five items of which Indochina was number 4 (points 1-3 were: Taiwan, China's legitimate rights and Korea).

⁹⁵ Brian Crozier, "The International Situation in Indochina", Pacific Affairs (December 1956), Vol. XXIX, No. 4, p. 310. Crozier may have relied on sources in the British Foreign Office.

⁹⁶ Cf. Weinstein, Vietnam's Unheld Elections, op.cit., p. 35; Murti, Vietnam Divided, op.cit., p. 190; a copy of the text may be located in Nhan Dan (September 17, 1955) cited in footnote 5 above.

According to Molotov:

On the whole, the principal provisions of the Geneva Agreements on Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia are being fulfilled though not without delay.

Nevertheless it should be pointed out that far from everything is being done to solve adequately the important political problems arising out of the said agreements. It is common knowledge that the consultations on general elections in Vietnam envisaged by the Geneva Agreements have not yet started. Evidently, the reason for that lies in the attitude of the South Vietnam authorities, who are trying to avoid implementing the Geneva Agreements and still declining to take part in these consultations.

We are entitled to expect that steps will be taken to carry out the Geneva Agreements on Indochina and that a breakdown of the consultation between the representatives of the North and South Vietnam will be prevented. This is essential if the general elections are to be held within the prescribed time limit to unite the country by restoring its national unity.⁹⁷

While in New York Molotov met with Macmillan and raised the matter of Diem's failure to agree to consultations. According to The Economist Molotov did not renew his earlier suggestion (made in July 1955) for a meeting of conference participants to discuss this obstruction and, in fact, appeared quite willing to leave the matter in Macmillan's hands.⁹⁸

Molotov and Macmillan met later (in November 1955) at the Big 4 Foreign Ministers meeting in Geneva. By that time the SVN's reply to Pham Van Dong's August 17th letter had been received. The SVN position remained unchanged.

⁹⁷ "Text of the Statement by Molotov at Meeting of United Nations General Assembly", The New York Times (September 24, 1955), pp.6-7.

⁹⁸ "'Happy Talk' in Indo-China", The Economist (October 15, 1955), Vol.177, No.5851, p.199.

While in Geneva Molotov raised the question of elections with both Macmillan and Pinay, the French Foreign Minister as press reports indicated. Yet new information has come to hand which reveals that:

In November 1955 as official documents when later released will evidence, Molotov bluntly dismissed the Indochina item from the agenda of the Geneva Foreign Ministers' Conference; even the United States had been willing to have the matter discussed. Diem's anti-consultation and anti-election posture was thereby assured of success, and the perception grew in Washington that, by tacit agreement of the superpowers, there were to be two Viet-Nams as there were two Koreas, two Germanys and two Chinas.⁹⁹

Subsequent events appear to confirm this viewpoint. Despite at least three additional DRVN notes to the Geneva Conference co-chairmen (November 25th, February 14th and April 9th),¹⁰⁰ as well as a Chinese call for reconvening the Geneva Conference (made January 26th),¹⁰¹ the Soviet attitude

⁹⁹ Paul Kattenburg, "Viet Nam and U.S. Diplomacy 1940-1970", *Orbis* (Fall 1971), Vol.XV, No.3, pp.822-823; the documents to which Kattenburg refers are the texts of cables sent by the U.S. Embassy in Geneva to the Department of State in Washington reporting on these developments; Interview with Paul Kattenburg, New York City, September 30, 1974.

¹⁰⁰ "Note of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, Co-chairman of the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indo-China, on November 25, 1955", in Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, Documents Related to the Implementation of the Geneva Agreements Concerning Viet-Nam (Hanoi: Press and Information Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1956), pp.57-61; "Note of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam to the Two Co-chairmen of the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indo-China, February 11, 1956", in *ibid.*, pp.117-121; and "Note of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam to the Two Co-chairmen of the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indo-China, April 9, 1956", in *ibid.*, pp.126-128. A copy of this publication was located in the U.S. Library of Congress.

¹⁰¹ New China News Agency in English morse to Europe, 1520 GMT, January 30, 1956; and Dispatch by Henry R. Lieberman from Hong Kong in The New York Times (January 31, 1956) pp.1-2.

remained unaltered. In April when Lord Reading (the British Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs) and A. Gromyko (the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister) met in London to discuss this issue, the Russians in fact revealed a hardened position. Russian acceptance of the British proposal for talks solely between "the co-chairmen" in effect meant a quick death for efforts to reconvene a Geneva Conference on Indochina - despite Soviet public support for the idea.¹⁰² The conclusion of these talks came on May 8th when the co-chairman addressed letters, in identical terms, to both North and South Viet-Nam.¹⁰³ These letters made clear three points: (1) the USSR agreed with the U.K. that holding reunification elections was less important than maintaining peace; (2) that the Soviet Union had agreed to treat the two Viet-Nam's as sovereign equals and (3) that the USSR had accepted the inevitability of partition by so doing.

A high level American intelligence analysis of the Gromyko-Reading talks summarised their results in this way:

The UK and the USSR, as co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference, met in London in April and May 1956 and reaffirmed support for the political settlement foreseen at Geneva but implicitly approved postponement of its implementation, including the nationwide elections. The co-chairmen called upon all parties to preserve the status quo and requested the International Supervisory and Control Commission (ICC) to continue supervising the Armistice. Thus no steps have

¹⁰² TASS (Moscow) in Russian Hellschreiber to Europe, 1750 GMT, April 5, 1956, in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (April 6, 1956), No.68, pp.BB1-BB4.

¹⁰³ Cf. Great Britain, Documents Relating to British Involvement in the Indo-China Conflict, 1945-1965, Miscellaneous No.25 (1965), Command Paper Cmnd. 2834 (London: H.M.S.O., 1966), pp.96-99.

been taken to bring about unification or a political settlement in Vietnam, and the partitioning of Vietnam has been tacitly accepted by the Geneva Conference powers for an indefinite period of time.¹⁰⁴

A later section of this analysis offered these further comments:

The Soviet position, as it developed at the April-May Geneva co-chairmen talks, accepts maintenance of the status quo for the time being ... the Soviet Union has shown no disposition to support the DRV's basic objective of securing control of all Vietnam at the risk of jeopardizing Soviet policy objectives in other areas or the Bloc's campaign of emphasizing "friendship" and reducing tensions.

C. Mikoyan's Visit (2-6 April 1956)

Mikoyan's visit to the DRVN in early April 1956 marked the first visit by a senior Russian government official to North Viet-Nam. Earlier (in December 1955) Khrushchev and Bulganin, who had made an Asian tour through India, Burma and Afghanistan, did not visit the DRVN - perhaps "notably".¹⁰⁵ Throughout 1954 and 1955 Soviet-Vietnamese state relations could best be described as "correct".¹⁰⁶ It was not until February 8, 1955, when Molotov delivered a foreign policy report to the Supreme Soviet that the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam was listed as a member of the Socialist Camp.

¹⁰⁴ U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Probable Developments in North and South Vietnam Through Mid-1957 (July 17, 1956), NIE No.63-56, op.cit., p.1068.

¹⁰⁵ Cameron, "The Soviet Union and Vietnam", op.cit., p.201.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.200.

However slogans issued subsequently on the occasion of May Day (1955) and the October anniversary of the Russian Revolution did not list the DRVN among those countries "building socialism". The Soviet position on Vietnamese reunification, discussed previously, was made quite clear in its slogans for May Day. Mention of the DRVN came after Korea and before East Germany; whereas statements were made on the struggle to reunify these two countries the slogan on Viet-Nam omitted any reference to this issue.¹⁰⁷

On March 23rd the DRVN announced that Mikoyan would soon visit Hanoi. The official VWP organ Nhan Dan promptly hailed this visit in an editorial "as an event of great significance". Both this editorial and the composition of the Russian delegation suggest that economic issues were possible items on the agenda. According to Nhan Dan, Mikoyan's visit came at a time when "the Vietnamese

¹⁰⁷ Molotov's report may be located in TASS (Moscow) dictation in Russian to Provincial Press, 1705 GMT, February 8, 1955 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (Feb.9, 1955) No.28, pp.CC1-CC36; slogans broadcast for May Day 1955 were carried by TASS (Moscow) in Russian Hellschreiber to Europe, 1500 GMT, April 20, 1955 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (April 21, 1955), No.78, pp.BB1-BB9; the 1954 slogans for the Russian Revolution were carried by TASS (Moscow) dictation in Russian to Provincial Press, 1700 GMT, October 23, 1954 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (October 25, 1954), No.207, pp.CC1-CC8. The slogans for the 38th anniversary of the Russian Revolution did mention the issue of unification. Viet-Nam was listed eleventh (after Korea and before East Germany), the slogan read: "(f)raternal greetings to the heroic people of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, fighting for the reconstruction of the national economy, for peace, for the national unification of Vietnam on a democratic basis". TASS (Moscow) dictation in Russian to Provincial Press, 1707 GMT, October 24, 1955 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (October 25, 1955), No.208, pp.CC1-CC9.

people are endeavoring to fulfil the 1956 State Plan, to achieve agrarian reform and push forward their political struggle for urging correct implementation of the Geneva Agreements ..."¹⁰⁸ The Soviet delegation included, besides Mikoyan, S.R. Rashidov, vice-president of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet; P.A. Maletin, deputy director of the General Department of Economic Relations; Spandarian, a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Trade assigned to Viet-Nam and two embassy officials stationed in Hanoi, the Soviet Ambassador and Embassy counsellor.¹⁰⁹

As there was no joint communique issued at the end of Mikoyan's visit we are forced to speculate on possible areas of Soviet-Vietnamese disagreement as well as other items under discussion. The Nhan Dan editorial of March 23rd with its reference to the Geneva Agreements, suggests that the Soviet Union's role as co-chairman was discussed. In particular we might assume that the forthcoming Reading-Gromyko talks was an item of particular Vietnamese interest. It would seem likely, therefore, that if the VWP delegation to the 20th Congress of the CPSU was not fully briefed on the Soviet position,¹¹⁰ that Mikoyan took this opportunity

¹⁰⁸ "Mot Su Kien Co Y Nghia Lon", [An Event of Great Significance] Nhan Dan (March 23, 1956), No.750, p.1.

¹⁰⁹ "Ho Chu Tich Thet Tiec Dong Chi Mo-coi-ang va cac Dong Chi Trong Doan Dai Bieu Chinh Phu Lien-Xo", [Chairman Ho Welcomes Comrade Mikoyan and Other Comrades in the Group of Soviet Government Representatives] Nhan Dan (April 3, 1956), No.761, p.1.

¹¹⁰ Cameron, "The Soviet Union and Vietnam", op.cit., p.201, states: "(n)or was the Vietnam problem accorded any attention at the Twentieth CPSU Congress in February 1956". This does not preclude private discussions however.

explain his government's stand with respect to Vietnamese reunification. Of all the possible issues that might have come under discussion, only this one seems likely to have caused sufficient disagreement between the two parties to have prevented the issuance of the customary joint communique. It seems doubtful that the initiative came from Mikoyan's side as the Russians most certainly would have agreed to some vague statement on the matter. We might also speculate that the failure to sign some sort of economic-trade agreement, which was expected,¹¹¹ arose out of Vietnamese concern not to be seen as acquiescing to the Russians in exchange for needed economic assistance.

One further item was almost certainly discussed: the recently held CPSU's 20th Congress at which Khrushchev denounced Stalin¹¹² and at which he also set forth his policy of peaceful coexistence. As we now know the 20th Congress marked the beginnings of the Sino-Soviet dispute; in fact the Chinese who had been silent on these issues, published their reaction on April 5 while Mikoyan was still

111 "DRV propaganda suggested some expectation that new aid or economic agreements might result". U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Probable Developments in North and South Vietnam Through Mid-1957 (July 17, 1956) NIE No.63-56, op.cit., p.1071.

112 The text of Khrushchev's speech, as released by the U.S. Department of State on June 4, 1956, may be found in Talbot, Khrushchev Remembers, op.cit., pp.503-562. A Reuters dispatch from Hong Kong in The New York Times (May 26, 1957), p.36, stated: "(i)t was apparently the visit of A.I. Mikoyan, a deputy premier, that encouraged North Vietnam to allow a greater freedom for its intellectuals. Mikoyan brought with him the new anti-Stalin policy set forth in February 1956 by N.S. Khrushchev".

in Hanoi.¹¹³ It is unlikely that these events were in any way related; rather we need only observe that Hanoi was by now increasingly confronted with the difficult task of pursuing her own interests, as a junior member of the socialist camp, in the face of ideological differences between her two major allies. No doubt the previous stormy pattern of Soviet-Yugoslav relations served as a warning should North Viet-Nam choose to "go it alone".¹¹⁴ This option was most likely foreclosed from the beginning as both Soviet and Chinese aid and diplomatic assistance were sought, and as the DRVN attempted to rehabilitate her economy and to reunify the country by peaceful means.

Khrushchev's formulation of a policy on peaceful coexistence, however, had a more direct impact on the VWP. In his speech to the 20th Party Congress Khrushchev argued peaceful coexistence was "a fundamental principle" of Soviet policy and that in the present era there were only two policies a nation could pursue "either peaceful co-existence

113 "On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", People's Daily (April 5, 1956) reprinted in People's China (April 16, 1956), pp.4-12; see the discussion in Donald S. Zagoria, The Sino-Soviet Conflict, 1956-61 (New York: Atheneum, 1964), pp.42-46.

114 U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Probable Developments in North and South Vietnam Through Mid-1957 (July 17, 1956), NIE No.63-56, op.cit., p.1074, states: "(t)he DRV on occasion acts in less conformity with the Bloc than the European Satellites". Reports that a possible "pro-Titoist" group existed in the DRVN leadership may be found in a suggestive article entitled, "Uncle Ho's Garden: New Spring Perennials to be Set Out", The Times of Viet Nam (December 1, 1956), No.46, p.5; and Fifield, The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia, op.cit., p.338.

or the most destructive war in history. There is no third way".¹¹⁵

Of particular interest to Vietnamese leaders was Khrushchev's exposition as to how revolutionaries might gain power. Implicit in his remarks was that a sharp parliamentary struggle offered the best path, although the potential for violence was ever present. Again, in Khrushchev's words:

Leninism teaches us that the ruling classes will not surrender their power voluntarily. And the greater or lesser degree of intensity which the struggle may assume, the use or the non-use of violence in the transition to socialism, depends on the resistance of the exploiters, or whether the exploiting class itself resorts to violence, rather than on the proletariat.

In this connection the question arises of whether it is possible to go over to socialism by using parliamentary means.¹¹⁶

After arguing that the present situation differed from that when the Bolshevik's seized power, Khrushchev concluded that "in a number of capitalist countries" the working class could rally the peasantry, intelligentsia and other patriotic forces and "capture a stable majority in parliament, and transform the latter from an organ of bourgeois democracy into a genuine instrument of the people's will".

No doubt that VWP leaders, after hearing Mikoyan's report on the 20th Congress, wondered what implications all of this bore for Viet-Nam. In this regard it is instructive

¹¹⁵ "Khrushchev's Twentieth Congress Speech", in G.F. Hudson, Richard Lowenthal and Roderick MacFarquhar, The Sino-Soviet Dispute (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), p.43.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p.45.

to compare the different emphasis given by Mikoyan and Ho Chi Minh in their speeches before a rally in Hanoi's Ba Dinh Square on April 3rd.

Mikoyan stressed two points: (1) the DRVN should heal the wounds of the war and develop the national economy and (2) achieve the reunification of Vietnam by peaceful and democratic means.¹¹⁷ Ho Chi Minh also spoke of consolidating the north and achieving the reunification of the country "on the basis of independence and democracy by peaceful means". Ho however linked these two propositions: consolidation of the north meant laying a firm basis for the reunification struggle.¹¹⁸ Whereas Mikoyan had been mute concerning how Vietnamese reunification would occur, Ho Chi Minh laid great stress on implementing the political provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreements (regarding consultations and general elections) and on achieving unity in the struggle for reunification "on the basis of the political program of the Viet-Nam Fatherland Front".

VI. THE NINTH PLENUM (April 19-24, 1956)

As we have noted above, an interchange on policy matters occurred between the Nam Bo Regional Committee and VWP leaders in the North during March and early April - that is,

¹¹⁷ TASS (Moscow) in English Hellschreiber to Europe, 0910 GMT, April 4, 1956; and Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, April 4, 1956.

¹¹⁸ "Bai Noi cua Ho Chu Tich Trong Cuoc Mit Tinh cua Nhan Dan Hanoi Mung Doan Dai Bieu Chinh Phu Lien-Xo", [Text of Speech by Chairman Ho at a Meeting of the People of Hanoi to Greet a Delegation of Soviet Government Representatives] Nhan Dan (April 4, 1956), No.762, p.1.

before the 9th Plenum. Since we know that the Political Bureau met sometime during March to hear reports on the 20th Congress of the CPSU, it seems likely that the instructions sent to the South at that time reflected the new policy on reunification which was being hammered out.

It is clear from remarks made by Truong Chinh that there was opposition in some quarters to the present line of peaceful struggle. Le Duan and others on the Nam Bo Regional Committee were the most likely source of this. According to Truong Chinh

Our policy is to reunify the country on the basis of independence and democracy and by peaceful means. The Viet Nam Workers' Party has, along with other political parties, mass organizations, and personalities in the Viet Nam Fatherland Front, adopted the Front's political program 'to struggle to build up a peaceful, unified, independent, democratic, prosperous and strong Viet Nam'.

However, there are some people who do not yet believe in the correctness of this political program and in the policy of peaceful reunification of the country, holding that these are illusory and reformist. The view of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on the forms of transition to socialism in different countries, and on the possibility of preventing war in the present era, has provided us with new reasons to be confident in the correctness of the policy of the Viet Nam Worker's Party and Fatherland Front in the struggle for national reunification.¹¹⁹

In other words, at that time the VWP decided against using their forces in the South to overthrow the Diem regime by

¹¹⁹ "Bao Cao cua Dong Chi Truong Chinh o Hoi Nghi Trung Uong Lan Thu 9 mo rong (19-24.4.1956)", [Report by Comrade Truong Chinh at the 9th Enlarged Session of the Central Committee (19-24 April 1956)] Nhan Dan (April 28, 1956), No.786, p.3. Emphasis added.

military means. The party did not stop its fellow-travelling with the Hoa Hao (Ba Cut) armed forces, however. Presumably it made a distinction between directly involving the Party in leading military action and supporting whatever action the opposition sects chose to take. In fact, when it was rumored that the VWP was supplying the Hoa Hao with military forces, DRVN spokesmen officially denied it.¹²⁰ No doubt excessive publicity on this matter would give the Diem regime just the excuse it needed to continue its refusal to enter into consultations with the North. Party officials may have also feared that too great an involvement in military activity would trigger off retaliation from either or both the ARVN and the United States.

At the beginning of April the "Voice of Viet Nam" began broadcasting in Bahnar, Jarai and Rhade.¹²¹ These are languages spoken by three of the largest montagnard groupings in South Viet-Nam's Central Highlands. No doubt they were begun to assist Party cadres in their task of implementing points 2 and 4 of Le Duan's draft 14-point action program. As we shall see, VWP policy had evolved to the point where direct military involvement was ruled out but organizational work to consolidate the Party's military position and "to prepare the proletarian class

¹²⁰ See the statement by a spokesman of the People's Army High Command, Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1042 GMT, December 3, 1955.

¹²¹ Voice of Vietnam in Bahnar to South Vietnam, 0845 GMT, April 1, 1956; in Rhade to the South Vietnam Highlands, 0845 GMT, April 1, 1956; and in Jarai to the South Vietnam Highlands, 0845 GMT, April 8, 1956.

for armed struggle" was not. Thus the option of using armed force was retained at the same time that the Party was emphasizing that reunification would come about by peaceful means by relying on the 1954 Geneva Agreements and the program of the Fatherland Front.

The VWP's 9th Plenum was in fact an enlarged meeting of the Central Committee to which the secretaries of Hai Phong, Hanoi, and various interzonal, regional and village committees as well as "a certain number of responsible cadres" had been invited.¹²² The main item for discussion was a report delivered by Truong Chinh on the CPSU's 20th Congress. No doubt Mikoyan's visit was also discussed although no mention of it was made in any of the published materials on the 9th Plenum. Truong Chinh had the unenviable task of relating these developments to the concrete situation in Viet-Nam as well as of explaining the Politburo's views on the matter.

Truong Chinh's report¹²³ touched on three parameters which, as has already been indicated, affected the options open to Party decision makers: external economic aid, domestic economic (especially agricultural) problems and national defence. Truong Chinh noted that the DRVN enjoyed

¹²² "Hoi Nghi Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Lao Dong Viet-Nam Lan Thu 9 (mo rong) Da Thanh Cong Va Be Mac", [The 9th (enlarged) Session of the Central Executive Committee of the Viet-Nam Workers' Party Has Achieved Success and Adjourned] Nhan Dan (April 27, 1956), No.785, p.1.

¹²³ "Bao Cao cua Dong Chi Truong Chinh o Hoi Nghi Trung Uong Lan Thu 9 mo rong", op.cit.; unattributed quotations in the text are taken from this source.

assistance in economic rehabilitation and cultural development "aimed at healing the wounds of war and raising the people's living standards" from Russia, China and other members of the socialist camp. In fact, "the economy of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam is part of the economic system of the Socialist camp".

The Secretary-General's remarks on domestic economic conditions pointed out that the economy of the DRVN "is still at a low level" and the "living standard of our people is still very low". He concluded that "we must therefore endeavor now to restore and develop agriculture, handicrafts and small industry and to fulfill the target set by the 1956 State Plan". Later in his remarks Truong Chinh hinted at possible disagreement within the Party over the approach he had just outlined by those who would emphasize the development of heavy industry. According to Truong Chinh, "We oppose the idea of underestimating agriculture, depreciating the restoration and development of light industry, and hurrying up the building of heavy industry, thereby failing to improve the well-being of the people and to create a firm basis for the development of the national economy".

Truong Chinh's remarks on national defence revealed a serious concern with both internal security and the possibility of attack from the South. On the matter of internal security the Secretary-General stated,

In North Viet Nam we have the conditions to advance toward socialism by peaceful means. But this does not mean that we will not use force to deal with any enemies who wreck public order and security or who carry out military interference in North Viet Nam.

These remarks must be seen in light of the following evidence. In September 1955 it was reported that armed resistance to the DRVN's authority had broken out in Hai Phong, Nong Cong and Hoi Xua and that bombs had been set off in Hanoi.¹²⁴ It might be possible to dismiss this particular report as being part of a psychological warfare campaign mounted by the anti-Communist Revolutionary Committee in Saigon. Yet reports of armed opposition to the DRVN by tribal groups in the north and northwest were confirmed by American intelligence sources at that time.¹²⁵ We do know that American officials were involved in organizing sabotage activities in the North in the post-Geneva period.¹²⁶ Truong Chinh's remarks indicate quite clearly that these activities were taken seriously.

Concerning the possibility of attack on the DRVN Truong Chinh had this to say:

our policy is to achieve national reunification through free nation-wide general elections. Nevertheless we cannot belittle the question of consolidating national defense. We do not neglect the fact that South Viet Nam is being taken over by the American imperialists. They are helping Ngo Dinh Diem to increase his military forces and are preparing to include South Viet Nam in the aggressive SEATO bloc.

¹²⁴ People's Radio, Revolutionary Committee (Saigon) in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 1330 GMT, September 27, 1955.

¹²⁵ U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Probable Developments in North and South Vietnam Through Mid-1957 (July 17, 1956), NIE No.63-56, op.cit., p.1069.

¹²⁶ Cf. "Landsdale Team's Report on Covert Saigon Mission '54 and '55", op.cit.; the U.S. aim appears to have been to create difficulty for the DRVN administration prior to the 1956 electoral deadline.

The Ngo Dinh Diem administration is bent on repudiating the Geneva Agreements, and what is more, has increasingly called for a 'March to the North'. That is why we must endeavor to consolidate our national defense and be ready to deal with all eventualities.

The Secretary-General's views represented a long standing fear on the part of the VWP leadership, extending back to the Resistance War, that America would either attack North Viet-Nam or support an ARVN attempt to do so. These perceptions were reinforced by South Viet-Nam's inclusion under the SEATO protective umbrella, as well as by a U.S. training program which upgraded ARVN units to divisional size. During 1955 DRVN officials observed a parade of high-ranking American officials pass through Saigon (see Table 4.1) as well as a series of SEATO meetings which discussed Viet-Nam's security.¹²⁷

In the latter half of 1955 DRVN propaganda began to attack what it alleged was a campaign "to march to the north" and "to fill in the Ben Hai river" (separating the two zones). ARVN Chief of Staff Gen. Le Van Ty was alleged to have made these remarks after an inspection tour of the demilitarized zone (DMZ) in December 1955, although the campaign was linked to Gen. O'Daniel's visit to Saigon in August.¹²⁸ Also, according to DRVN allegations,

¹²⁷ Held in Manila (September 1955), Pearl Harbor (1-15 November 1955), Bangkok (November 25, 1955) and Karachi (March 6, 1956).

¹²⁸ Burchett, North of the 17th Parallel, op.cit., p.248; for an account of General Le Van Ty's trip see: Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, August 7, 1958.

Table 4.1

Visits to South Viet-Nam by Senior American Officials
August 1955 - March 1956

<u>Date of Arrival</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>
August 1955	Maj. Gen. O'Daniel	ex-commander TRIM*
14 September 1955	Gen. Mark W. Clark	Commanding General Armed Forces Pacific
12 November 1955	Admiral F.B. Stump	Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Navy in the Pacific
17 December 1955	Wilber M. Brucker	Secretary of the Army
28 December 1955	Admiral Radford	Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
12 January 1956	Donald Quarles	Secretary of the Air Force
14 March 1956	J.F. Dulles	Secretary of State
29 March 1956	Admiral Arleigh A. Burke	Chief of Naval Operations
		* Training Relations Instruction Mission

violations along the DMZ, including armed intrusions, increased rapidly at this time.¹²⁹

The policy on reunification which emerged at the 9th Plenum represented a careful weighing of these three factors: (1) the DRVN as a member of the socialist camp, tied as it was by certain links of economic dependency on

¹²⁹ Various complaints were lodged by the PAVN High Command to the Central Joint Armistice Commission; see: Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, September 14, 1955 for example. Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0545 GMT, December 5, 1955 carries a PAVN protest to the International Commission.

Russia (for Burmese rice for example), had an obligation to respect Khrushchev's new line on peaceful coexistence, (2) faced with serious domestic economic and security problems the VWP had to first consolidate its own control over the territory of the DRVN as a matter of priority and (3) faced with certain external threats to its security the DRVN chose to consolidate its own capacity for self-defence and to rely on Soviet and Chinese initiatives to reduce tension in the world in general and in Indochina in particular. According to the resolution adopted by the 9th Plenum,¹³⁰ the VWP recognized the "possibility" of preventing war and the "possibility" that Viet-Nam might be reunified by peaceful means but chose to underscore its own peculiar dilemma in this way:

In light of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, our Party will take into account the new possibilities of the present revolutionary struggle. While recognizing the possibilities of preventing war, we do not forget that as long as imperialism exists the economic basis of war continues to exist. Therefore the peoples of the world must constantly reinforce their struggle for peace and remain vigilant to the plots of the warmongers.

While recognizing that a number of countries have the potential to advance towards socialism by peaceful means, we must bear in mind that where the bourgeoisie still controls a powerful army and police machinery and is determined to use violence to repress the revolutionary movement, an armed struggle for power is inevitable. Therefore the proletariat must be well prepared in advance.

¹³⁰ "Nghị Quyết của Hội Nghị Ban Chấp Hành Trung Ương Đảng Lao Động Việt-Nam Lần Thứ 9 (mở rộng) [19-24.4.1956]", [Resolution of the 9th Enlarged Session of the Central Executive Committee of the Viet-Nam Workers' Party (19-24 April 1956)] Nhan Dan, (April 27, 1956), No.785, p.1.

In light of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, our Party reaffirms its confidence in the policy of consolidating the North, and the struggle for the reunification of the country on the basis of independence and democracy by peaceful means as completely correct. However there exists in the other half of our country reactionary forces who are plotting war. Therefore we must enhance our vigilance, consolidate national defense and prepare for all eventualities.¹³¹

While it might be argued that this passage merely reflected the VWP's giving lip-service to Khrushchev's ideological formulation, Ho Chi Minh, in his closing address to the 9th Plenum, linked it directly to the situation in Viet-Nam. According to Ho:

While recognizing that in certain countries the road to socialism may be a peaceful one, we should be aware of this fact: in countries where the machinery of state, the armed forces, and the police of the bourgeois class are still strong, the proletarian class still has to prepare for armed struggle.

While recognizing the possibility of reunifying Viet Nam by peaceful means, we should always remember that our people's principal enemies are the American imperialists and their agents who still occupy half our country and are preparing for war; therefore, we should firmly hold aloft the banner of peace and enhance our vigilance (we should be in a position to change the form of the struggle).¹³²

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² According to American intelligence the underlined portion of the speech was written into the text on publication in 1961/62. What Ho Chi Minh said at that time (in 1956) is indicated by the words in parentheses; see: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Central Intelligence Weekly Review (May 10, 1956) in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5 Tab 3, p.47. For a copy of the speech as it was published in 1962 consult: Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962), Vol.IV, pp.153-156. The phrase in question reads, "we should firmly hold aloft the banner of peace, and enhance our vigilance". The first paragraph is a paraphrase of Khrushchev's formulation which, I believe, Ho signalled out for attention.

The 9th Plenum also discussed the very important issues arising out of Khrushchev's secret speech denouncing Stalin (the cult of the individual, democracy in the Party and criticism/self criticism). Of particular interest, in light of later developments in Sino-Soviet relations, was the VWP's characterization of Stalin. The resolution of 9th Plenum adopted what has subsequently been labelled the Chinese or "balanced view" of Stalin:¹³³

Stalin was one of the most outstanding Marxists. He scored great achievements for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet people, the Socialist movement, and the national liberation movement of all countries in the world. But in the latter part of his life Stalin committed a number of serious mistakes which he failed to recognize. Therefore, while confirming the role and great achievements of Stalin, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has also pointed out his mistakes so as to resolutely correct their consequences....

VII. CONCLUSION

The VWP's 9th Plenum recognized that the reunification of Viet-Nam would have to take place within a different time-frame from that envisaged in July 1954 at the Geneva Conference. For the moment, any policy changes on this matter would have to wait for improvement in the economic and internal security of the North as well as changes in the international environment more conducive to a relaxation of tensions and peaceful settlement of outstanding issues. The VWP did not initiate a full-scale review of reunification

¹³³ Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict*, op.cit., pp.43-49; and David Floyd, *Mao Against Khrushchev* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), pp.17-31 and 231-235.

strategy at the Plenum as other issues, such as those arising from the CPSU's 20th Congress, commanded attention. Primary emphasis continued to be placed on socialist construction in the North; "paying attention to the South" meant taking into consideration changes in the balance of forces there. Although the first voices of disenchantment with this emphasis were heard, the VWP resolved to continue its campaign for the reunification of the country "by peaceful means". Approval was also given to certain steps (advocated by Le Duan) that would allow a consolidation of the Party's forces and which would provide a basis for "political violence" should that ever become necessary. These steps were to be undertaken by cadres in the South using their own resources; the return of regrouped cadres was slight indeed and their main task seems to have been to apply the program of the Fatherland Front to the situation in the South. Efforts over the next three months were directed at carrying out these policies in time for maximum impact in July 1956, the deadline set for nationwide general elections.

CHAPTER 5

POLITICAL STRUGGLE REAFFIRMED (May - September 1956)

I. THE AFTERMATH OF THE 9TH PLENUM: POLITICAL STRUGGLE (May - June 1956)

During the course of 1956 senior Party cadres in the south drafted a major document entitled, "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam".¹ Its authorship has been ascribed to Le Duan and Pham Hung".² Since internal evidence in the documents suggests it was drafted no earlier than November 1956 it seems reasonable to assume that it had been in preparation some time before then. The 10th Plenum, held in September 1956, was preoccupied with problems arising from the land reform campaign. As the VWP Politburo had the authority to commission such a study at any time it is unnecessary to link the decision to call for a review of southern policy to any particular meeting of the Central Committee. Nevertheless one can speculate that cadres in Nam Bo were called upon to prepare a major policy review sometime after the 9th Plenum. Because of the crisis atmosphere prevailing in September it seems reasonable to

¹ Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet Nam, op.cit., p.22.

² Experiences of the South Vietnam Revolutionary Movement During the Past Several Years (circa 1963). Working Paper Item 301, p.3, states "At the end of 1956 the popularization of the volume by Comrade [Le] Duan entitled 'The South Vietnam Revolutionary Path'...; Nhu Phong, "List of Public Figures Presently Making Up the Top Leadership in North Vietnam" (Saigon: mimeographed, 1972), p.13, states in Pham Hung's biographical section, without citation, "Co-author with Le Duan of 'The Revolutionary Lines for South Vietnam'".

suggest that while a draft of the document may have been submitted at the 10th Plenum, it was more likely to have been discussed at the 11th Plenum in December. In either case what is important was that VWP leaders were already casting about for policy options after their hope for mid-year elections had been dashed.

As we have noted in the previous chapter, in early April the VWP had rejected suggestions for a step up in violence in Nam Bo. At the same time it was certainly clear to them that there was little hope for securing the Republic of Viet-Nam's compliance of the election modalities. The 9th Plenum had marked a crucial moment of truth: the Party's line on reunification, set in September 1954, had been a failure. From what followed it seems likely that the Party's organization in the south was ordered to conduct a holding operation until new plans could be formulated. Meanwhile attempts were made to shift the focus of Party activities from a preoccupation with the terms of the Geneva Agreements to other matters involving much broader issues as working conditions and social welfare.

Following the 9th Plenum the Party orchestrated two quite separate political struggle movements. The first movement was focused on the July electoral deadline. Even though senior Party officials now assumed that elections would not be held as scheduled they still maintained that the Agreements formed the basis for legal political activities. In addition, echoes of popular discontent could be expected to be heard, albeit faintly, on the international scene thus reinforcing DRVN diplomatic moves.

The issue was raised in May when banners bearing slogans calling for "consultations" and "unification" were reported at a mammoth May Day parade in Saigon.³

According to a later account:

A movement for North-South consultations with a view to general elections and the restoration of normal relations between the two zones was founded in Saigon in June 1956. It reached its climax in [sic] July 10, 1956, ten days before the date for general elections provided for in the Geneva Agreements. Strikes in factories and markets were held in support of this movement with the participation of the great majority [sic] of the Saigon population. The struggle continued until August in an atmosphere of white terror practised by the Diem regime.⁴

In July a massive effort was launched in the rural areas where meetings, parades and demonstrations were held. Leaflets, banners, and slogans painted on walls and houses demanding "consultations", "unification" and an "end to terrorism" made their appearance.

Various village councils passed resolutions and circulated petitions, many of which were presented to the International Commission for Supervision and Control. However when all these activities are compared to the Party-initiated "movement for better living conditions"

³ Vietnam News Agency in English Morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, (April 30, 1957); Tinh Hinh Phong Trao, p.3; for additional accounts of the political struggle movement at this time consult: Nguyen Khac Vien, "The Peasants' Struggle (1954-1960)", Vietnamese Studies No.8 (1966), pp.50-77; and Vu Can, "The People's Struggle Against the US-Diem Regime", op.cit.

⁴ "Saigon, Bastion of the Anti-US Struggle", Vietnam Courier (June 1975), New Series, No.37, p.25; Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 0500 GMT, August 17, 1956.

it seems evident that the former were mechanical protests designed to garner the maximum propaganda affect. Whatever revolutionary fervour was built up during this short period was certinally dashed when the failure of the campaign became obvious. The July 20th deadline came and went leaving in its wake a disillusioned rank-and-file. The Party was trapped between its commitment to the Geneva Agreements and the knowledge that the Agreements most crucial political provisions would not be implemented. One American government study, based on interviews with Party members, concluded that the failure to hold elections in 1956 "came as a sharp disappointment to Hanoi whose political program for two years had been aimed at precisely the goal of winning them..."⁵ It was only natural that the Party would turn to other issues to retain its mass support.

In the previous chapter it was mentioned that in early April, anticipating the events just described, the Party took steps to put its urban organization into operation. This clandestine network had been built up since the period of regroupment (1954-55) when the Party prudently assigned cadres to the cities. An official history of this period states

In the province capitals, district seats, Saigon and some other areas, we succeeded in exploiting the enemy's legal organizations, such as worker and schoolboy unions, women's associations, etc. ...Through these organizations we successfully guided the people to struggle, thereby gaining a number of necessary benefits for them and, at the same time, recruited many key personnel for the Revolution.⁶

⁵ United States Department of State, A Threat to Peace, op.cit., pp.3-4.

⁶ Tinh Hinh Phong Trao, p.15.

In June 1956, that is after the deliberations of the 9th Plenum were known, the Nam Bo Regional Committee held its first congress at which it reviewed the results of the political struggle movement.⁷ The conclusions reached at this gathering were not unexpectedly brought into accord with higher policies. In fact the difficulties experienced in the conduct of political struggle were now ascribed not to the failure to employ revolutionary violence, but to the underestimation of the worth of the so-called "social welfare slogans [ready issues]". A Party review of the post-Geneva political struggle movement commented on these events in this way:

From the restoration of peace to the middle of 1956, the struggle movement stressed general elections more than social welfare. However, after corrective action the slogans [emphasizing] social welfare and democracy were given more prominence, but this was still not enough. Meanwhile conditions were favorable for the motivation of the struggle for the normalization of North-South relations, peace and national reunification...At the start of this period the struggle movement stressed slogans demanding general elections; but when there was no hope for these elections, the struggle movement stressed social welfare slogans, the slogans of democracy were still neglected.⁸

The first congress also reviewed the results of Party action on social welfare issues particularly in the urban areas. During the six-week period between May and mid-June major strikes involving perhaps as many as 27,000 workers broke out in various industries: the metal trades, water power, shoe trade, waterside workers and on rubber

⁷ Ibid., pp.4 and 6.

⁸ Ibid., p.4.

plantations⁹ (in Thu Dau Mot, Dau Tieng and Ba Ria). The major issues in all cases (besides echoing support for consultations) revolved around specific grievances related to working conditions (see Table 5-1). For example, employees of Charner and Eiffell (metal companies) went out on strike demanding higher wages, family allowances, sick care and other benefits as well as the abolishment of the foreman system. This urban offensive continued well into August. However, in the face of police reaction and other forms of repression the movement could not sustain itself. The political struggle movement related to the Geneva Agreements was similarly affected. This meant that a crucial turning point had been reached as the RVN brought increased forces over to the offensive.

II. THE GENEVA AGREEMENTS: CONSULTATIONS AND ELECTIONS

As we have noted in chapter four, DRVN attempts in 1955 to begin electoral consultations with the "competent authorities" in the South were unsuccessful. On the one hand the Diem government gave lip-service to the principle of elections while at the same time refusing to enter into consultations with the North. The SVN's position was maintained in the face of Western pressure to enter into negotiations with the DRVN in the expectation that demands for secret balloting, international supervision,

⁹ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0532 GMT, June 12, 1956; and Voice of Vietnam dictation in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, August 2, 1956 in U.S. FBIS, Daily Report, (August 8, 1956), No.154, p.CCC4.

TABLE 5-1

LABOUR UNREST IN SOUTH VIETNAM, MAY - SEPTEMBER 1956

<u>Month:</u>	<u>Location:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
1 May	Saigon	May Day demonstration; banners and slogans appear demanding elections and reunification
8 May	Bien Hoa	Communist labor organizers arrested in the Binh Son plantation (Long Thanh district)
May	Saigon	metal workers go on strike; they demand: abolishment of foreman system, higher wages, family allowances, sick leave, and the application of provisions of the social welfare laws
May	Cholon	Sympathy strike by water power workers
May	Saigon	Shoe trade workers strike; demand the halt of the importing of foreign-manufactured shoes and sandals and an end to unemployment.
13-15 May	Saigon	waterside workers strike; they demand the end to the foreman system and an improvement in their living conditions
15 May	Thu Dau Mot	rubber plantation workers strike; demand unconditional reinstatement of dismissed workers
16 May	Thu Dau Mot	sympathy strike by workers at nearby plantation
	Ba Ria	strike by rubber workers for better working conditions
	Dau Tieng	rubber workers strike, they demand the restoration and care of the graves of deceased plantation workers

TABLE 5-1 continued

<u>Month:</u>	<u>Location:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
	Saigon	disruption in various industries; demands for an 8-hour day, better conditions, and higher wages
8 June	Loc Ninh	workers arrested by Army units
9 June	Binh Duong, Phuoc Hoa	leaders of the rubber workers' union arrested; 137 workers dismissed
13 June	Dau Tieng	rubber workers' executive committee reported missing
25 June	Saigon	Vietnamese Confederation of Christian Trade Unions issues strike threat over arrests of unionists
19 July	Saigon	workers at Standard Vacuum Oil Co. strike, demand salary increase, overtime pay rise, sickness compensation
22 July	Saigon	workers' delegation holds meeting in Khanh Hoi; resolution calls for an end to unemployment, reduction of fines, improvement in workers' living conditions (water and electricity to be provided), improvement in sanitation facilities, freedom of association, public meeting and the right to organize unions, an end to arrests
2 August	Thu Dau Mot, Gia Dinh	strike by sugar cane factory workers, they demand a wage rise
2 August	Saigon	Messageries Maritimes employees strike, demand reinstatement of dismissed workers
2 August	Bu Dop	strike on rubber plantation; demand that a hospital be built, and that workers' quarters be supplied with electricity

TABLE 5-1 continued

<u>Month:</u>	<u>Location:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
4-10 August	Saigon	tally clerks at Saigon port go on strike; demand higher wages, labour insurance and overtime rates
August - September	Cholon	workers at 38 rice husking factories and rice stores strike; demand higher wages, abolishment of arbitrary sackings and an improvement in sanitary conditions
	Saigon	East Asian Saw Mill employees strike, demand wage increase Overseas Air France workers strike, demand wage increase and reinstatement of dismissed workers

SOURCES: Journal d'Extreme-Orient (May-September 1956); Vietnam News Agency broadcasts (May-September 1956); The Times [London] (June 25, 1956), p.6; and Tinh Hinh Phong Trao Dau Tranh Chinh Tri o Nam Bo.

and democratic freedoms would be rejected. This strategy was outlined by John Foster Dulles, U.S. Secretary of State, in a telegram sent to American embassies in Paris and Saigon in April 1955:

Our proposal is based on Eden's plan put forward at [the] Berlin Conference for All German elections and has already been approved by France for us [in] Germany and rejected by the Communists. The basic principle is that Free Viet Nam will insist to the Viet Minh [DRVN] that unless agreement is first reached by the latter's acceptance of the safeguards spelled out, that no repeat no further discussions are possible regarding the type of elections, the issues to be voted on or any other factors. After we have Diem's general acceptance we can proceed [to] inform UK and France of this plan which we think [is the] only formula which ensures [a] satisfactory response to [the] Geneva Agreement and at [the] same time [is a] plan which is unassailable in intent but probably unacceptable to [the] Communists because of provisions for strict compliance to ensure genuinely free elections.¹⁰

¹⁰ United States Department of State telegram (April 6, 1955), Dulles 4361, to the American Embassy in Saigon and repeated for the information of the American Embassy in Paris in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 10, p.892. Interestingly the views of the Secretary of State were not shared by officials in the International Security Affairs section of the Department of Defense; in a draft paper outlining recommendations to the State Department they wrote: "(i)n considering the questions of elections, the assumption that the Viet Minh would not agree to free elections could well be erroneous despite the consistent Communist rejection of election proposals for the unification of Germany, Austria and Korea. In other countries, the Communist[s] control only a minority of the population, whereas in Viet-Nam they control the majority. In addition, they have residual popular support in areas outside their control and they may feel that their agreement to elections held under conditions which might be termed 'free' would inevitably rebound to their advantage....Thus, the Communists might be so confident of success that they would be willing to permit 'free' elections under international supervision albeit continuing to utilize all the standard communist processes and tactics in an attempt to assure the outcome they would desire. Should they do so, there is no reason to doubt at this time that they would win easily in the 1956 elections". See: letter from the U.S. Department of Defense, International Security Affairs (April 22, 1955) to the U.S. Department of State in ibid., p.936.

The Diem government, however, was extremely fearful of adopting this tactic lest it come under pressure to implement other provisions of the Geneva Agreement a document which, the SVN repeatedly stressed, it did not sign or agree to. There are other considerations which may have influenced Diem's stance. Not only was his government in a weak position; but consultations with the Communists would undoubtedly have sparked panic among the predominately Catholic anti-Communist refugees, eroding the government's base of support. Simultaneously, the Party underground could be expected to exercise its influence on the domestic scene should talks start. Faced with these pressures, as well as bias - in the SVN's view - in the operation of the ICC, it is easy to explain why the Diem government remained adamant in refusing consultations.¹¹

On the other hand, France was rapidly divesting herself of all responsibilities under the 1954 Agreements. Initially France was expected to retain her Expeditionary Corps in South Viet-Nam to oversee the implementation of the Geneva Agreements and to serve as a deterrent to an invasion from the north. However during 1955, the demands of the war in Algeria caused a rapid withdrawal of French troops (and American-supplied military equipment) from Viet-Nam. This process meant that the security of the Diem government was in jeopardy.¹² Therefore the SVN

¹¹ Nutt, Troika on Trial, op.cit., Vol.I, pp.350-352.

¹² Ibid., pp.219-220.

attempted to secure a statement from France pledging support in case of attack. When this was not forthcoming the SVN exerted even stronger pressures on the French to relinquish control over Vietnamese units still technically a part of the French Union Forces.¹³ The SVN also sought membership in SEATO but this was quickly dropped after Dulles visited Saigon in March 1956 and assured Diem of American support in case of invasion.¹⁴

Eventually the SVN invoked France's declaration, made at the conclusion of the Geneva Conference, to respect the sovereignty of the SVN and to withdraw its military forces if so requested. The news that France intended to dissolve her High Command by April 15th provoked an immediate reaction from India, chairman of the ICC. In a note dated March 23rd she informed the co-chairmen:

It will be recalled that a representative of the Commander-in-Chief of the French Union Forces signed the agreement pertaining to Viet-Nam and Laos, assumed responsibility for the execution of the agreement and pledged the co-operation of the Franco-Viet-Nameese Command with the International Supervisory Commission to help administer it. Neither the French authorities nor the Viet-Nam authorities have made any proposals as to the manner in which the Commission could continue to supervise the Cease-fire Agreement after the withdrawal of

¹³ Dispatch by Harold Callender from Paris in The New York Times (June 13, 1955), p.4; dispatch by Harold Callender from Paris in ibid. (June 14, 1955), p.5; Paris dispatch in ibid. (June 26, 1955), p.6; dispatch from Paris by Thomas F. Brady in ibid. (July 3, 1955), p.2; and Saigon dispatch in ibid. (July 3, 1955), p.2.

¹⁴ Associated Press dispatch from Saigon in ibid. (March 15, 1956), p.12; for SVN approaches towards SEATO, see: Robert Alden dispatch from Saigon in ibid. (March 9, 1956), p.5.

the French High Command. Although the South Viet-Nameese authorities have promised to give practical co-operation and to take over the responsibility for the security of the Commission from the 1st April onwards, they are not prepared to assume the legal obligations of the French High Command as successors of the French Power in South Viet-Nam.

In the circumstances, the Commission views with serious concern the prospect to supervise an agreement which will cease to have any legal basis since one party to the agreement - the French High Command - will have disappeared. It is clear that the Commission will be unable to hold the South Viet-Nam accountable, unless it accepts the full residuary obligations undertaken by the French High Command.

The Commission, therefore, desires that the two Co-Chairmen should consider the situation as early as possible and, in any case, before the 15th of April, 1956, with a view to resolve the legal lacuna and to enable the Commission to discharge the functions entrusted to it by the Geneva Conference on Indo-China.¹⁵

Earlier, in the wake of Diem's rejection of consultation and the anti-ICC riots in Saigon (July 1955), Poland and India, in the fourth interim report of the ICC had rejected Saigon's offer of "practical cooperation" with the Commission. In the words of the report:

We would like to add in this connection that during our discussions with the Government of the State of Viet-Nam, we have been told that it will give full protection and practical co-operation to the Commission as an International Peace Commission but will not make a formal or public declaration to that effect in view of the position taken up by it with reference to the Geneva Agreement and the Final Declaration. It is obvious that the International Commission which has, in the discharge of its responsibilities under the Agreement, to undertake various tasks which,

¹⁵ Great Britain, Documents Relating to British Involvement in the Indo-China Conflict 1945-1965, Cmnd. 2834, op.cit., pp.93-94.

in effect, result in the curtailment of the sovereignty of both administrations in the North and in the South, cannot carry on its activities in the face of the declared opposition of the Government of the State of Viet-Nam to the Geneva Agreement merely on the basis of a personal or practical understanding which can be revoked at any time. In any case, any ad hoc arrangement outside the Agreement, however effective, naturally amounts to revocation of the Agreement and the Commission cannot be a party to any such arrangement.¹⁶

Prime Minister Nehru also expressed his country's views to the Geneva Conference co-chairmen, warning them that India would not participate as chairman of the ICC unless all the Geneva Conference participants accepted the 1954 Agreements.¹⁷ He also advanced the argument that the State of Viet-Nam, in India's view, was the successor to France and therefore bound to undertake all the political and military responsibilities heretofore assumed by France.¹⁸

As a result of these developments the co-chairmen (Britain and the USSR) on December 21, 1955, addressed letters to all the conference participants and members of the ICC, requesting their views as to how the implementation of the 1954 Agreements might be improved.¹⁹ France replied that although it had residual responsibilities (control of

¹⁶ Fourth Interim Report of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam, Vietnam No.3 (1955), Command Paper Cmd. 9654 (London: H.M.S.O., December 1955).

¹⁷ Nutt, Troika on Trial, op.cit., Vol.I, p.356; and SarDesai, Indian Foreign Policy, op.cit., p.98.

¹⁸ Nutt, Troika on Trial, op.cit., Vol.I, p.357.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.359; and SarDesai, Indian Foreign Policy, op.cit., p.98.

the DMZ, security for the ICC) under the provisions of the Agreements, these would end if the structure of the French High Command was altered (which is precisely what Diem had in mind to accomplish prior to July 1956). Secondly, France stated that it regarded its obligations as in no way exceeding those of the other conference participants who had agreed to the Final Declaration.²⁰

The Communist countries, Poland, China and the USSR, all supported in varying degrees the DRVN's call for convening of a new Geneva Conference to include the original nine participants plus the three ICC members.²¹ As we have noted in the previous chapter, this approach was effectively scuttled when Britain proposed, and the Soviet Union accepted, that the co-chairmen meet and discuss the problems of Indo-China. After receipt of the Indian note of March 23rd, mentioned above, Lord Reading and Andrei Gromyko agreed to meet in London during April and May (1956). On the eve of these talks France announced that it would dissolve its High Command in Viet-Nam.

In summary, the combination of France's withdrawal, Indian warnings, and SVN obstinancy all threatened to upset the framework of the 1954 Geneva Agreements. In

²⁰ Nutt, Troika on Trial, op.cit., p.359.

²¹ Great Britain, Vietnam and the Geneva Agreements: Documents Concerning The Discussion Between the Representatives of Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Held in London in April and May 1956, Vietnam No.2, (1956) Command Paper, Cmd. 9763 (London: H.M.S.O., May 1956), p.4; dispatch from Singapore in The New York Times (July 21, 1955), p.6; dispatch from Hong Kong in ibid. (January 31, 1956), pp.1 and 2; and dispatch by Welles Hangen from Moscow in ibid. (March 4, 1956), p.21.

these circumstances the co-chairmen, in an attempt to prevent the resumption of armed conflict, stated that the preservation of peace in Indochina was more important than carrying out on schedule the political provisions of the 1954 accords.²² In addition to the letters addressed to the governments of the DRVN and SVN (discussed in chapter four), the co-chairmen also wrote to France and the International Commission. France replied that she was willing to lend her good offices to the continued support of the ICC and the Joint Commission (part of the Geneva machinery) but that she would assume no further responsibilities.²³ India, in a reversal of its 1955 position, agreed to continue as ICC chairman despite SVN's refusal to publicly acknowledge responsibilities under the 1954 Agreements as France's successor.²⁴ The SVN did not reply for in its view the letter from Britain and the Soviet Union was seen as an endorsement for its statement of April 6th offering to cooperate with the ICC and to respect the ceasefire. The SVN also stated (a view which Britain circulated privately) that the newly elected National Assembly should decide the SVN's policy on North-South consultations.²⁵

²² Dispatch from London in *ibid.* (May 11, 1956), p.2. The letter of the co-chairmen stated "[p]ending the holding of free elections for the reunification of Viet-Nam, the two Co-Chairmen attach great importance to the maintenance of the cease-fire under the continued supervision of the International Commission for Viet-Nam".

²³ Nutt, Troika on Trial, *op.cit.*, Vol.I, p.363.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

III. INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY: DRVN INITIATIVES

In the wake of Mikoyan's April 1956 visit to North Viet-Nam, the VWP leaders hammered out and then unveiled a series of diplomatic initiatives designed to dramatize their commitment to the political terms embedded in the Geneva Agreements. There were two main aspects to this new offensive: (1) an intense interaction with the co-chairmen and (2) a series of specific proposals designed to ensnare the Diem regime in bilateral consultations with the DRVN. Needless to say both approaches failed and by mid-year senior Party officials were confronted with internal dissatisfaction over the course of these policies.

A. Approaches to the Co-chairmen

By the time of the ninth plenum the VWP leadership had been appraised of Soviet reluctance to give more than perfunctory support to the DRVN in its attempts to start consultations with the Diem government. Therefore the results of the Reading-Gromyko talks in London in April and May (1956) came as no surprise. In fact while the Geneva Conference co-chairmen were still deliberating senior VWP leaders gave public expression to two themes which were to come into increasing prominence. In late April on the occasion of Lenin's birthday anniversary, VWP Secretary General Truong Chinh called upon France and the RVN to respect the Agreements, and in particular called upon the Diem regime to "open a political consultative conference with the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to discuss the question of free general elections throughout

the country".²⁶ On May Day Pham Van Dong gave stress to the second theme, the reconvening of a new Geneva Conference. In his words,

[a]t present, the implementation of the Geneva Agreements is being seriously sabotaged, the reunification of Vietnam through free general elections is being hampered and peace in Vietnam is being jeopardized. That is a very important and urgent question which must be solved and only a new Geneva Conference can solve it.²⁷

On May 8th Lord Reading and Andrei Gromyko, acting in their capacity as co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference, sent out four letters, one each to France, the ICC, the DRVN and the RVN.²⁸ Letters to the latter were drafted in identical terms which led observers at the time to conclude that the Soviet Union was signalling its acceptance of Viet-Nam's partition. In other words, the Soviet Foreign Minister did not object to affixing his signature to a document which addressed the governments of both the DRVN and RVN as equals.²⁹

²⁶ Vietnam News Agency in Vietnamese morse to South Vietnam, 0638 GMT, April 27, 1956.

²⁷ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0645 GMT, May 1, 1956.

²⁸ Great Britain, Documents Relating to British Involvement in the Indo-China Conflict 1945-1965, Cmnd. 2834, op.cit., pp.96-99.

²⁹ United States Central Intelligence Agency, Probable Developments in North and South Vietnam Through Mid-1957, (July 17, 1956) NIE, No.63-56, op.cit., pp.1068 and 1071; Murti, Vietnam Divided, op.cit., pp.176-177; and Dispatch from London in The New York Times (May 11, 1956), p.2.

The letter of May 8th called upon the DRVN and the RVN to make every effort to implement the Geneva Agreements on Vietnam, to prevent any future violations of the military provisions of these agreements, and also to ensure the implementation of the political provisions and principles embodied in the final declaration of the Geneva Conference. To this end the authorities of both parts of Vietnam are invited to transmit to the co-chairmen as soon as possible either jointly or separately their views about the time required for the opening of consultations on the organization of nationwide elections in Vietnam and the time required for holding elections as a means of achieving the unification of Vietnam.³⁰ (emphasis added)

In short, England and more significantly Russia had accepted the status quo and the implied postponement of the electoral provisions of the Geneva Agreements.

The co-chairmen, in their other letters, raised several additional issues the most important of which was the continuance of the ICC. The Commission was requested to continue operating until elections were held and France was prevailed upon to continue supplying and otherwise assisting the ICC's in-country teams. Both North and South Viet-Nam were asked to give the Commission "all possible assistance".

Despite the fact that the Reading-Gromyko talks were so disappointing to the DRVN there was nevertheless one ray of hope. Paragraph 6 of the May 8th letter stated that the co-chairmen would continue to consult

and if necessary in the light of the situation [in Vietnam] they will also discuss measures which should be taken to ensure the fulfillment of the Geneva Agreements on Vietnam, including the proposal to convene a new conference of

³⁰ Great Britain, Documents Relating to British Involvement in the Indo-China Conflict 1945-1965, Cmnd. 2834, op.cit., p.96

members of the original Geneva Conference and of the states represented in the International Commission on Indochina.³¹

In light of this passage Pham Van Dong addressed a letter to Ngo Dinh Diem on May 11th proposing consultations.³²

When it became obvious that this approach had been rejected Dong wrote to the co-chairmen on June 4th strongly hinting that his government would formally request a new conference "[i]f the South Viet-nam authorities continue to reject the holding of consultations and general elections".³³ Two days earlier, however, Chou En-lai had stated that even though the People's Republic of China had proposed a new conference his Government would "wait to see how recent proposals by Britain and the Soviet Union....worked out".³⁴

In light of Chinese and Soviet attitudes the DRVN had to content itself with statements for the record. On July 13, that is one week before the scheduled election deadline, Pham Van Dong drafted another letter to the conference co-chairmen calling for the convening of a consultative conference.³⁵ A separate letter of the same date was sent

³¹ Ibid., p.97.

³² Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia 1122 GMT, May 12, 1956.

³³ Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Documents related to the Implementation of the Geneva Agreements Concerning Viet-Nam, op.cit., pp.146-149.

³⁴ Reuters dispatch from Peking in The New York Times (June 2, 1956), pp.1 and 4; carries a report of a 70 minute interview with the Chinese Premier.

³⁵ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1140 GMT, July 16, 1956.

to the French Foreign Minister (C. Pineau) to point out French obligations.³⁶

On July 21, the day after the election deadline, the Soviet Union approached the British government proposing that they as co-chairmen address a note to the SVN requesting that the RVN communicate without delay its considerations concerning dates for the start of consultations as well as for the holding of general elections.³⁷ This initiative was immediately endorsed by Nhan Dan on July 23rd. Pham Van Dong formally placed his government's views on the record early the following month. In a letter dated August 10th addressed to the Geneva Conference co-chairmen he endorsed the Soviet note and called upon the co-chairmen to recommend to the RVN the dates for the convening of a consultative conference.³⁸

B. Policy Towards the Republic of Viet-Nam

In the period from April to July (1956) the DRVN publicly committed itself to a series of specific proposals on consultations and elections with the RVN. These statements were designed to counteract the argument that free elections were impossible in the Communist ruled north.³⁹ They had

³⁶ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, July 19, 1956.

³⁷ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, July 23, 1956.

³⁸ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0512 GMT, August 14, 1956.

³⁹ Similar proposals had been made earlier; according to Murti, Vietnam Divided, p.187, Ho Chi Minh, writing under the pseudonym 'C.B.', had addressed two letters to Nhan Dan (November 17, 1955 and February 25, 1956) providing definitions for free elections.

the secondary purpose of undercutting the RVN's position by offering concessions in the hopes that elements of the RVN could be won over into at least agreeing to open consultations. In retrospect, and because previous accounts of this period have neglected these proposals, it is worthwhile giving the matter close attention.

We have reviewed the DRVN's letter to Diem (May 11th) proposing consultations. On June 13th the Voice of Vietnam introduced a new item in the debate. In order to counter the view that free elections could not be held in the North it invited a delegation of "representatives of the people, army and the administration to the North to see whether or not there is freedom there before holding general elections".⁴⁰ On July 6th Ho Chi Minh, no less, made an appeal to the nation in which he proposed two steps to bring about national unity:

- (1) Normal relations and freedom of travel between the two zones to be restored, facilities to be restored; facilities to be provided for contacts between various political, economic, cultural, and social organizations of the North and of the South.
- (2) A consultative conference to be held between representatives of the administration of both zones to discuss the issue of free general elections for the reunification of the country, on the basis of the Geneva Agreements.⁴¹

Four days later the Voice of Vietnam quoted President Ho as saying that there were sound economic reasons why Viet-Nam should be unified:

⁴⁰ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0430 GMT, June 13, 1956.

⁴¹ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1230 GMT, July 6, 1956.

[t]he South is rich in rice and rubber; the North possesses rich minerals. Commercial exchange between the two regions would help our national economy toward a powerful development.⁴²

As was to be expected the RVN refused to take up the DRVN's offers. July 20th came and went presenting no further opportunity for the North to bring effective pressure to bear on Diem to respect the political provisions of the Geneva Agreements. Reports at that time indicated a certain anxiety in the Western camp which partly expected some overt DRVN reaction. In fact intelligence reports pointed out that units of the People's Army of Viet-Nam stationed near the DMZ had pulled back into defensive positions.⁴³ As time passed RVN and US observers took the DRVN's lack of response as evidence that it too had accepted the status quo.

In reality VWP leaders, after setting their priorities and after assessing the balance of forces had concluded, in Ho Chi Minh's words

Our policy is: to consolidate the North and to keep in mind the South.

To build a good house, we must build a strong foundation. To have a vigorous plant with green leaves, beautiful flowers and good fruit, we must take good care of it and feed the root.

⁴² Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, July 10, 1956.

⁴³ Harold Hinton, Communist China in World Politics, op.cit., p.31; the information on PAVN troops movements is provided in CIA and National Security Council briefings of July 2 and 10, 1956 cited in United States - Vietnam Relations, Book 2, IV.A.5, Tab 3, p.47, footnote 157. A copy of the unpublished footnotes is in the author's possession.

The North is the foundation, the root of the struggle for complete national liberation and the reunification of the country. That is why everything we are doing in the North is aimed at strengthening both the North and the South. Therefore, to work here [this appeal was directed at southern regroupees then in the North] is the same as struggling in the South: it is to struggle for the South and for the whole of Viet-Nam.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, according to Ho, "our present political struggle, although long and hard, will certainly be victorious".⁴⁵

On July 20th Nhan Dan once more called for the convening of a new Geneva Conference "in view of the present grave situation".⁴⁶ Two days later Ton Duc Thang, a senior VWP and DRVN official and a native of the Mekong Delta, signalled a further shift in his government's position.⁴⁷ The DRVN was still committed to seeking the implementation of the Geneva Agreements by various approaches to the co-chairmen. However, possibly in recognition of the fact that North-South consultations were a long way off, Thang suggested several areas of contact which could be started. He renewed the call for representatives of the South to come North to discuss how "normal economic cultural, and social

⁴⁴ Ho Chi Minh, "Letter to the Cadres from South Vietnam Regrouped in the North", Selected Works, Vol.IV, op.cit., pp.157-161; it was this letter, among other indications, which led American observers to conclude that the DRVN had resigned itself to partition, see: United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5., Tab 3, pp.24 and 47.

⁴⁵ Ho Chi Minh, "Letter to the Cadres from South Vietnam Regrouped in the North", op.cit.

⁴⁶ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, July 20, 1956.

⁴⁷ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0530 GMT, July 22, 1956; unattributed quotations are taken from this source.

relations" could be restored. He proposed a meeting between the appropriate "competent organizations" to negotiate a fixed ratio of currency as well as "an exchange of raw materials and goods beneficial to the economy and people's life" in both parts of the country. For instance North Viet-Nam would consume South Viet-Nam's rubber, coconut oil, etc. while South Viet-Nam would consume North Viet-Nam's cement, coal and other products.

On a more personal note Thang proposed that the exchange of family post-cards, which had been agreed upon earlier, be expanded to include letters, and that northern refugees currently in the South "whether they be army personnel or civilians" be permitted to visit the North "to see their birthplaces, their parents, their wives and children, and their other relatives". And, as a clear indication of his government's long range view on national unification, Thang revealed that "[t]he houses, land, and other properties left behind by these compatriots [refugees to the South] in the North are being carefully looked after by the Government and people here".

There is some evidence that the DRVN may have offered privately to postpone the elections. This would account for the views of Thang and others who implied that unification, while still possible, was a distant objective. Jean Lacouture has written:

[i]n 1955 and 1956 the leaders of the Vietnamese People's Republic [i.e. the DRVN] made it known in Saigon, on several occasions and through several intermediaries, that they were ready to postpone the plebiscite and to appeal to a foreign arbiter.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Lacouture, Between Two Truces, op.cit., p.68.

Dennis Bloodworth was able to acquire further details.

According to one of his dispatches:

Ho Chi Minh...has offered - on condition - to stop pressing for the unification of North and South Vietnam for the next five years, or even longer.

His conditions are that the Government of the Southern Premier, Ngo Dinh Diem, shall be replaced by one favouring economic co-existence with the Communist North, and that all American economic and military aid personnel be withdrawn from the South.

According to opposition sources in Saigon, the offer has been made to anti-Diem Nationalists and sect leaders who, in a semi-clandestine exchange of views, have stipulated that the Colombo Powers be asked to guarantee the integrity of the South under such a scheme. The Vietminh replied by agreeing to this condition.

Although Ngo Dinh Diem has been maintained firmly in power by continued and unreserved American support and the Nationalists cannot, therefore, implement this offer, the Vietminh proposal provides them with an important propaganda weapon.⁴⁹

If these unofficial approaches were made, they would have been a reflection of the VWP's view that there were "some elements" within the State of Viet-Nam who opposed the policies of the Diem government on North-South consultations. For example a press report in The Times (London) stated:

[t]he South Viet Nam Government is understood on good authority to have had difficulty in replying to the Co-chairmen's proposal [of May 8th] because of internal divisions - between the moderates who favour talks with the North, and the extremists who reject any contact with the Communists.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Dennis Bloodworth dispatch from Saigon in The Observer (January 15, 1956), p.1.

⁵⁰ Saigon dispatch in The Times (May 28, 1956), p.8e.

Later in the year, Bui Van Thinh, initially close to Diem's inner circle, was sent abroad. News reports from Hanoi suggested that his fall from power was connected with such disputes within the RVN government.⁵¹ There were, of course, a variety of non-government politicians who were active in maintaining contacts with all sides. The Dai Viet radio reported, for example:

It is reported that political activities led by Tran Van Huu [a former SVN Premier] and Nguyen Manh Ha are being plotted in the capital of Cambodia....An important conference was convened in Phnom Penh on February 22-26 to discuss their attitude, possibly to form an action committee or a government in exile to be set up in the western region of South Vietnam from where it will negotiate with the Viet Minh. It is known that Huu favors relations with the Viet Minh while Nguyen Manh Ha is a well known Communist....These two people held this meeting with the participation of representatives of Ba Cut, Nam Lau, Bay Vien...[all prominent sect leaders].⁵²

The object of this semi-secret maneuvering, from the Party's view, of course, was to negotiate an acceptable arrangement with non-Communist politicians in an effort to undermine Diem's position.

In summary, DRVN attempts to bring about the implementation of the political provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreements on schedule or at some future date, were unsuccessful on both the internal and domestic levels. Externally the USSR provided minimal support for the DRVN's diplomatic efforts, preferring instead the status quo in Indochina and detente with the West. China too seems to have been

⁵¹ Voice of Vietnam in Cambodian to Southeast Asia, 0400 GMT, July 6, 1956.

⁵² Voice of the Dai Viet National Liberation Troops in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 0500 GMT, February 26, 1956.

concerned to maintain peace in the region. Both Cambodia and Laos accorded diplomatic recognition to Peking during this period (as also with Moscow). China also appears to have been instrumental in getting the DRVN to sign a joint statement with the Royal Lao Government in which they both acknowledged the sovereignty, territorial unity and integrity of the other.⁵³ As we have seen, China let the issue of convening a new Geneva conference drop.

France managed to extricate herself from her responsibilities in Indochina. In May Premier G. Mollet and his Foreign Minister, C. Pineau, held talks in Moscow with Premier Bulganin and Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister. Both sides welcomed the May 8th letter of the Geneva Conference co-chairmen and in their final communique committed themselves to the status quo in Viet-Nam (indefinite partition without elections).⁵⁴

Indian policy turned in a direction less favourable to the DRVN. Initially India thought that peace in Indochina could be maintained best by implementing the 1954 Agreements. With the passage of time which witnessed increased political stability in the South, India came to accept the view that peace could be maintained best by not upsetting the status quo by trying to force the question of a political settlement. Nehru, when questioned on this issue before the Indian Parliament in July 1956, merely stated that as far

⁵³ Fifield, The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia, op.cit., pp.353-356.

⁵⁴ "Joint French-Soviet Communique" as carried by Reuters in a dispatch from London in The New York Times (May 20, 1956), p.2.

as India was concerned it was aware that the DRVN had made certain proposals and that these had not been favourably received by the State of Viet-Nam.⁵⁵

All of these factors taken together present a clear picture of the international system drifting into a phase of detente rendering the sharpening of tensions over the issue of Viet-Nam's unification out of the question for the DRVN's major allies.⁵⁶ In mid-1956, in short, the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam was left without firm international support for its policy objectives.

IV. DOMESTIC AFFAIRS IN THE SOUTH: DIEM TAKES THE OFFENSIVE.

Ever since his appointment as Premier in July 1954 Ngo Dinh Diem consistently denounced the Geneva Agreements and insisted that his government was not bound by their terms. Despite the momentary wavering of the United States government which initially acted as if the threat of a Communist electoral victory was real,⁵⁷ Diem never consented to start

⁵⁵ Dispatch from New Delhi in *ibid.* (July 28, 1956), p.3.

⁵⁶ It should be recalled that talks between the United States and the People's Republic of China at the ambassadorial level had begun in Geneva in August 1955; Hinton, Communist China in World Politics, *op.cit.*, p.255.

⁵⁷ The question of the American government's attitude towards the July 1956 election has never been fully explored. According to analysts writing in the Pentagon Papers: "the U.S., which had expected elections to be held, and up until May 1955 had fully supported them, shifted its position and in the face of Diem's opposition, and of the evidence then accumulated about the oppressive nature of the regime in North Vietnam". See: "Evolution of the War: Origins of the Insurgency", in United States - Vietnam Relations, *op.cit.*, Book 2, Summary IV.A.5., p.5. For an alternative view consult: H. Bradford Westerfield, "What Use Are Three Versions of the Pentagon Papers?", American Political Science Review (June 1975), Vol.LXIX, No.2, pp.690-691.

talks with the DRVN. By early 1956 he was firmly in political control,⁵⁸ having turned back the various challenges to his regime described earlier. Nevertheless Diem pressed on with the consolidation of his power base, reducing the remaining sect forces even further until they became fugitives operating astride the border with Cambodia. With the sect dissidence reduced to such a condition Diem increasingly turned his attention towards those areas of rural Viet-Nam where the Party and its supporters had maintained their influence. By the end of the year the combined effects of an officially sponsored Anti-Communist Denunciation Campaign (ACDC) as well as various full-scale military operations had similarly reduced the Party's fortunes. It was obvious to all that the Republic of Viet-Nam had survived its painful birth and that the initiative had passed to Diem. The United States provided a full measure of support as the adolescent Republic was poised to enter what later became known as the so-called "miracle years".

A. The Sect Remnants: The Hoa Hao and the Lien Minh Cao Dai.

Viet-Nam National Army military units pursued the remnants of Ba Cut's Hoa Hao forces throughout April

⁵⁸ William A. Nighswonger, Rural Pacification in Vietnam (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), p.13; United States Department of State, Office of Intelligence Research, "The General Situation in South Vietnam", Intelligence Brief, No.1876 (February 7, 1956) in United States-Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 10, pp.1048-1050.

and May. It was a one-sided affair, for with the capture of Ba Cut, his lieutenants appeared incapable of reviving the anti-Diem struggle. Increasingly these key dissident leaders surrendered or were captured, whereupon some of their men came under Party influence and leadership.

For example, on April 28th nearly 500 men, including 36 officers of the Le Quang and Nguyen Hue regiments, turned themselves in at Can Tho; two days later Lt. Co. Re-surrendered along with 300 of his men (Le Quang Regiment) at Cai Von. These were followed in early May when an additional group of 110 Dan Quan (People's Militia), regional Hoa Hao forces, surrendered en masse to RVN authorities. On May 25th Pham Cong Cam, the new Hoa Hao chief of staff, was killed in a skirmish with ARVN forces operating in Long Xuyen province.⁵⁹ Thirty more soldiers surrendered at Can Tho on June 1st. On May 16th Duong The Xuong, a leading Hoa Hao official, was captured in Sadec province. This was followed on July 22nd by the capture of most of the staff of the 207th battalion of the Le Loi Regiment. With these events the Hoa Hao insurgency was well and truly broken.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ United Press dispatch from Saigon in The New York Times (May 26, 1956), p.6; Cam operated under the alias of 'Ba Bung'.

⁶⁰ Associated Press dispatch from Can Tho in ibid., (June 12, 1956), p.6; United Press dispatch from Saigon in ibid., (June 28, 1956) p.5; Associated Press dispatch from Paris in ibid., (July 5, 1956), p.4; Associated Press dispatch from Saigon in ibid., (July 10, 1956), p.4; and Reuters dispatch from Saigon in ibid., (July 13, 1956), p.4.

Units of the Lien Minh Cao Dai fared slightly better. They managed to elude combat with ARVN forces by slipping across the border into Cambodia; in May there were reports that ARVN troops were carrying the fighting into Cambodian territory as part of their policy of "hot pursuit". These episodes led to a diplomatic incident between RVN and Cambodia.⁶¹

In August over 300 men of the Lien Minh Cao Dai placed themselves under the protection of the Royal Khmer government by allowing themselves to be disarmed by units of the Cambodian Army. The RVN tried unsuccessfully to brand these men as Communists (Viet-Cong), a charge the Khmer government stoutly refuted.⁶² This incident clearly marked the end of armed Cao Dai dissidence which, as we have seen, is slight by comparison with that of the Hoa Hao (see Table 5-2 for force estimates in mid-1956).

B. The Anti-Communist Denunciation Campaign.⁶³

In May of 1956, at a conference of officials connected with the Anti-Communist Denunciation Campaign, Tran Chanh

⁶¹ Cach Mang Quoc Gia (May 26, 1956) and Preacheachon (May 18, 1956) cited by the Voice of Vietnam in Cambodian to Southeast Asia, 0400 GMT, June 3, 1956; Radio Hanoi in Vietnamese, 0115 GMT, August 24, 1956; Journal d'Extreme-Orient (August 14, 1956), p.5; ibid., (August 27, 1956), p.5; Radio Hanoi in English, 1445 GMT, August 24, 1956; and Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 0500 GMT, September 11, 1956.

⁶² "Sur une depeche traitant de refugies militaires au Cambodge", Journal d'Extreme-Orient (August 27, 1956), p.5.

⁶³ For general remarks on this campaign see: Nighswonger, op.cit., pp.35-36; Robert Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964),

cont'd

TABLE 5-2

ESTIMATES OF THE MILITARY STRENGTH OF DISSIDENT SECT FORCES
(JULY 1956)

UNIT:	LOCATION:
1. The Hoa Hao* (12 battalions)	
Battalion 213, Le Quang Regiment	Plain of Reeds
Battalion 206, Le Loi Regiment	Plain of Reeds
Battalion 215, Le Quang Regiment	north of Chau Doc
Phan Thanh Gian Battalion	north of Chau Doc
Battalion 209, Bac Tien Regiment	north of Chau Doc
Battalion 19	north of Chau Doc
Nguyen Trai Battalion	north of Chau Doc
Tay Do Battalion	north of Chau Doc
Battalion 207, Le Loi Regiment	south of Chau Doc
Battalion 20	south of Long Xuyen
Battalion 21	east of Rach Gia
Hong Chau Battalion	north of Can Tho
TOTAL SIZE: N = 1,000	
2. The Cao Dai (8 battalions)	
5 battalions of the Trinh Minh The Regiment**	southwest Tay Ninh province
6th Battalion, Trinh Minh The Regiment	southeast of Trang Bang on the eastern edge of the Plain of Reeds
SUB-TOTAL N = 300	
1st Battalion	north of Katum in Cambodia
32nd Battalion	north of Katum in Cambodia
SUB-TOTAL N = 150	
TOTAL SIZE N = 450	
3. The Binh Xuyen (2 platoons)	
2 platoons	northwest of Bien Hoa northeast of Bien Hoa
TOTAL SIZE N = 50	

* The designation "battalion" for Hoa Hao forces may be misleading. It was retained by U.S. military observers for ease of unit identification (i.e. for continuity in reporting). Battalion strength at this time varied between 30-40 men.

** Renamed at this time as the Hong Huong Regiment.

SOURCE: "The July 1956 Situation Report submitted by the U.S. Army Attache in Saigon", Working Paper, Item 25-B.

Thanh, head of the Department of Information, boasted that the ACDC had "entirely destroyed the predominant communist influence of the previous nine years".⁶⁴ He went on to document this view by providing the following figures: 94,041 communist cadres rallied to the RVN and 5,613 cadres surrendered.⁶⁵ In addition, 119,954 weapons had been captured, 75 tons of documents uncovered and 707 secret arms caches unearthed. Obviously the figures were grossly exaggerated, as were other figures provided by the Committee for the Denunciation of Communist Subversive Activities (see Tables 5-3 and 5-4). Party sources indicated that by February 1956 a total of 40,768 persons had been arrested in addition to 732 reported missing.⁶⁶ It would appear

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pp.167-169; and Committee for the Denunciation of Communist Subversive Activities, Achievement of the Campaign of Denunciation of Communist Subversive Activities, First Phase (Saigon: The People's Directive Committee for the National Congress of Denunciation of Communist Subversive Activities, May 1956).

⁶⁴ Cited by Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.168.

⁶⁵ U.S. Operations Mission to Vietnam, Saigon Daily News Round-up (May 14, 1956), p.3 cited in *ibid.*; alternative figures are provided in Committee for the Denunciation of Communist Subversive Activities, Achievements of the Campaign, op.cit., p.116, which lists 15,473 Communists as having been denounced, 5,906 Communists surrendered and 87,456 Communists who broke with the Party; this is quoted approvingly by Vu Can, "The People's Struggles Against the US-Diem Regime", op.cit., p.61.

⁶⁶ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, May 8, 1956. The figures are for the period July 1954-February 1956 and include, in addition to the ones cited in the text, 1,563 persons killed and 4,636 persons wounded by the RVN authorities in the course of the ACDC.

that all opponents of the Diem regime, Communist cadres and non-Party sympathizers as well as sect adherents, were included in the ACDC's tables. No doubt some of the figures were fabricated by officials anxious to please (for example Phu Yen province alone accounts for over 70% of all defectors). It is difficult to explain the number of provinces for which no data was recorded. On the other hand RVN officials, if they believed their claims, grossly overestimated the effectiveness of their anti-Communist suppression because they failed to take into account the extensive nature of the Communist underground organization and the wide network of supporters which sustained it. In brief, RVN claims that they had destroyed the Communist underground in mid-1956 were premature to say the least. Nhan Dan, the Party's newspaper, did admit, however, that "the struggles of our people are complicated by the actions of the Diem regime".⁶⁷ On May 20th it was announced that the Anti-Communist Denunciation Campaign would enter "period II, stage I" whose purpose would be "to destroy the whole network secretly woven by the adversary which covers the whole of free Vietnam".⁶⁸

During July attention was turned to the provinces in central Viet-Nam, especially in areas of Communist strength

⁶⁷ "Our Fatherland Will Be Reunited At Any Cost", Nhan Dan (June 10, 1956) as broadcast by Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0145 GMT, June 13, 1956. In another broadcast the Party ridiculed Tran Chan Thanh's figures as "only the imagination and fantasy of the SVN authorities", *ibid.*, in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 0500 GMT, May 30, 1956.

⁶⁸ The Fight Against the Subversive Communist Activities in Vietnam (Saigon: Review Horizons Special Edition, 1956), p.4.

TABLE 5-4

ACHIEVEMENT OF THE ANTI-COMMUNIST DENUNCIATION CAMPAIGN - A SUMMARY
(May 1956)

<u>Region:</u>	<u>Directorates Established:</u>	<u>Communists Denounced:</u>	<u>Communists Defectors:</u>	<u>Surrendered Communists:</u>	<u>Arms Caches:</u>	<u>Anti- Communist Meetings:</u>
Central	773	12,767	83,666	943	694	3,042
Southern	1,314	2,706	3,641	4,958	24	425
Highlands	109	60	149	0	1	108
TOTAL:	2,196	15,473	87,456	5,901	719	3,576

SOURCE: Committee for the Denunciation of Communist Subversive Activities, Achievements of the Campaign of Denunciation of Communist Subversive Activities, (Saigon: The People's Directive, May 1956).

(Quang Nam, Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces). Operations in this area were similar to what had gone on before. A three-pronged offensive involving Army units, security service personnel and mobile propaganda teams worked over an area classifying the population according to their past political commitments.⁶⁹ Anti-communist indoctrination courses were run in which the people were subject to numerous lectures. Later anti-communist meetings were convened in the villages at which alleged former Communist cadres recounted their past activities and declared their support for the Diem government. Alleged Communist agents stepped forward declaring their repentance for their past misdeeds

⁶⁹ See "Rebellion Against My-Diem", in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5., Tab 2, p.50.

conversion to anti-Communism. At some meetings individuals were denounced from the crowd as "Viet-Cong" whereupon they were taken away to begin the cycle of activity just described.

Suspected Communists were hauled off to political re-education centers where they were forced to undergo political re-training courses. Many, in fact, remained under administrative detention (an tri) for up to two years. Others, it was alleged, were executed. There can be no doubt that the ACDC was accompanied by widespread abuse which the underground cadres tried to turn to their advantage. However the scope of the opposition to this campaign was ineffectual. In fact the anti-Communist repression was so widespread that authentic Communist officials were trapped in the dragnet alongside the innocent.

According to Tran Chanh Thanh, by May (1956) some 15,000 - 20,000 individuals, considered either Communist or pro-Communist, had been detained in these political re-education centers in the period from July 1954.⁷⁰ One French observer, Philippe Devillers, estimated that by the end of 1956 the number of political prisoners stood at 50,000.⁷¹ Undoubtedly included among this number were other opponents of the Diem regime besides Communists.

Diem followed Ordinance No.6 (January 1956) with further laws to restrict and hinder his political opponents. Whereas

⁷⁰ Osborne, "The Tough Miracle Man of Vietnam", op.cit., p.166.

⁷¹ In a lecture at a seminar entitled, "International Politics of Southeast Asia" Cornell University (August 1965) cited in Kahin and Lewis, The United States in Vietnam, op.cit., p.100 and 121.

Ordinance No. 6 permitted government officials to place under arrest and detention anyone considered a danger "to the defense of the state and public order", Ordinance No. 47 (August 21, 1956) made it illegal to act on behalf of any organization designated as Communist.⁷² Conviction under this decree carried with it the death penalty. We have already observed in the case of the Lien Minh Cao Dai how loosely the term "Communist" could be applied.

C. Military Operations

Hand in hand with "period II, stage 1" the political side of the ACDC went various military operations: Thoai Ngoc Hau (14 June, 1956 - 24 February, 1957), Nguyen Hue (29 December, 1955 - 31 May, 1956) and Truong Tan Buu (17 July, 1956 - 15 February, 1957). In fact subsumed under the name of each operation were several ARVN initiatives which took place in various regions at different levels of intensity. The main purpose of each operation seems to have been to seek out and destroy any military force judged in opposition to the State of Viet-Nam. In practice this meant engaging and defeating bandits, the various sect forces and their Communist allies. In the course of these operations ARVN units entered heretofore sacrosanct Communist base areas, uncovering supply and ammunition caches as well as greatly disrupting the Communist organizational structure. Many cadres were forced to flee their

⁷² Osborne, "The Tough Miracle Man of Vietnam", op.cit., p.164-165; and Kahin and Lewis, The United States in Vietnam, op.cit., pp.100-101.

area of assignment thereby greatly paralyzing any attempt at a concerted response.

(1) Operation Nguyen Hue

During the period January - June 1956 ARVN forces, under the command of General Duong Van Minh, conducted operations against Hoa Hao units operating in the Plain of Reeds. The operation was code named "Nguyen Hue". By May 10th this area was declared pacified by the Voice of the Armed Forces radio and the center of operations turned to the provinces of western Nam Bo and the Ca Mau peninsula.⁷³ There the Hoa Hao forces disintegrated under ARVN pressure, sparking the defections and surrenders described above.

However the shift of operations also meant that ARVN units were encroaching on Communist strongholds in the U Minh forest area for the first time.⁷⁴ During late April and all of May, in fact, the prime preoccupation of ARVN seems to have been to savage the Communist underground rather than the Hoa Hao. On May 31 General Minh declared that Operation Nguyen Hue was completed. His troops had, it was reported, "destroyed all Viet Minh Communist administrative organizations and annihilated the Communist mobile armed groups which formerly controlled the U Minh

⁷³ Voice of the Armed Forces in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 1115 GMT, May 10, 1956.

⁷⁴ "These campaigns were very important. They were aimed at attacking the people. Main force, regional force, popular force and Nung units were assigned to conduct operations deep within our former resistance base areas", Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.7.

Thuong and U Minh Ha areas".⁷⁵ The official results of Operation Nguyen Hue are summarized in Table 5-5.

(2) Operation Thoai Ngoc Hau

Almost immediately after General Minh declared the end of Operation Nguyen Hue he assumed command of another operation, code named "Thoai Ngoc Hau", which concentrated its attention in central and western Nam Bo. In particular a major pacification program was launched in the provinces of Can Tho, My Tho, Soc Trang and Vinh Long, during the months of July and August. So-called mopping-up actions continued in Sa Dec, Chau Doc, Long Xuyen, Ca Mau, Dong Thap Muoi and Rach Gia until February 1957 when the operation was officially terminated.

In the course of Operation Thaoi Ngoc Hau General Minh set up various self-defence groups which were charged with responsibility for security when the regulars departed. Various civic action programs were carried out, among them were road construction and repair as well as various facilities to be used in physical education and sporting activities. An intensive psychological warfare campaign was waged with the dual purpose of inducing defections and securing the support of the people. A summary of results may be found in Table 5-5.

⁷⁵ Vietnam Press, "Cleanup Operation on the Plain of Camau", The Times of Viet-Nam Weekly, (May 5, 1956), Vol.I, No.16, p.2; and Vietnam Press, "Operation 'Nguyen Hue' Ends", ibid., (June 2, 1956), Vol.I, No.20, p.4.

(3) Operation Truong Tan Buu

Operation Truong Tan Buu began officially on July 17, 1956 under the command of General Mai HUU Xuan. It ended on February 15, 1957. The prime area of operation was in eastern Nam Bo. During July and August ARVN units combed the provinces of Thu Dau Mot, Gia Dinh, Cholon, Bien Hoa, Tay Ninh, Ba Ria, Vung Tau and Ham Tan and Tan Linh districts of Binh Thuan. It appeared obvious from the various communiques issued as the operation progressed that both Binh Xuyen dissidents and Communist cadres were the object. From the point of view of ARVN several notable successes were scored: Nguyen Van Phu, one of the top Binh Xuyen leaders (called the "Ba Cut of the East") was killed in early August; while later that month several provincial level Communist officials fell victim.⁷⁶ Several arms caches were uncovered (see Table 5-3).

During August when the wave of strikes swept the rubber estates in eastern Nam Bo, units assigned to Operation Truong Tan Buu were quickly ordered into action. Accordingly Communist and non-Communist labor leaders were rounded up thus sparking additional sympathy strikes. A later Party review of this period recounted, "we suffered in every area. Specifically, the forces of the Quan Dang Bo

⁷⁶ Vietnam Press cited by United Press in a dispatch from Saigon in The New York Times (August 10, 1956), p.4; for reports on Communist cadres caught see Journal d'Extreme-Orient (August 13, 1956), p.5; ibid., (August 23, 1956), p.5; and Vietnam Press cited in ibid., (August 29, 1956), p.5.

(military forces of the Party's organization) in Thu Duc, Lai Thieu and Long Thanh were destroyed by the Truong Tan Buu campaign".⁷⁷ Table 5-5 summarizes the results of this operation.

TABLE 5-5
MILITARY OPERATIONS LAUNCHED IN 1956: SUMMARY OF RESULTS

<u>Operation:</u>	<u>Arrested:</u>	<u>Killed:</u>	<u>Wounded:</u>	<u>Rallied:</u>	<u>Prisoners:</u>
Nguyen Hue ^a	1,005	681	63	-	-
Thoai Ngoc Hau ^a	2,117	441	-	-	-
Truong Tan Buu ^a	882	102	-	-	-
	<u>4,004</u>	<u>1,224</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Nguyen Hue ^b	8,649	-	-	-	-
Thoai Ngoc Hau ^c	124	106	60	147	115
Truong Tan Buu ^d	261	24	-	174	32
	<u>9,034</u>	<u>130</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>321</u>	<u>147</u>

SOURCES:

^a Vo Nguyen Giap, Memorandum presented to the ICC (March 6, 1959); Vietnamese Studies, Nos. 18/19. No figures given for "rallied" and "prisoners".

^b December 29, 1955-May 31, 1956. The Times of Viet-Nam Weekly, No.21 (June 9, 1958). Figures for those "arrested" include those designated "surrendered" and "captured".

^c June 28 - August 31, 1956. Figures compiled from the relevant issues of the Journal d'Extreme-Orient.

^d July 17 - September 15, 1956. Figures compiled from the relevant issues of the Journal d'Extreme-Orient.

⁷⁷ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.25.

D. Other Domestic Developments in the Republic of Vietnam.⁷⁸

In June 1956 the Ministry of the Interior, acting on instructions from President Ngo Dinh Diem, abolished the elected village administrative councils (hoi dong huong chinh) which had been set-up by Bao Dai in 1953. It is probably too much of an exaggeration to conclude, as have two American observers, that "[a]t one stroke the autonomy that South Viet-Nam's 2,560 villages had enjoyed even under the French rule was swept away..."⁷⁹ For example research by Jeffrey Race into conditions in Long An province revealed that

this memorandum [of June 1956] only ratified an existing situation: in large areas of Long An councils had been appointed because elections could not be held under the 1953 (or earlier) legislation, and such councils as had been elected had for the most part disappeared by 1955.⁸⁰

The significance of this administrative act was two fold: (1) the abolishment of elections prevented Communists or pro-Communists from penetrating the RVN administrative structure at the most basic level and (2) it was the responsibility of loyal provincial governors, appointed at Diem's pleasure, to select the new village leadership. As has been observed elsewhere Diem had a tendency to appoint

⁷⁸ Cf. Nighswonger, Rural Pacification in Vietnam, op.cit., p.41; and Shaplen, The Lost Revolution, op.cit., p.133.

⁷⁹ Kahin and Lewis, The United States in Vietnam, op.cit., p.104; see also Scigliano, op.cit., p.32.

⁸⁰ Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., p.21.

outsiders, that is predominately Catholics from central and northern Viet-Nam, to leadership positions. Over time the RVN structure "assumed the aspect of a carpetbag government in its disproportion of Northerners and Centralists..."⁸¹

This was to create problems in the future. Kahin and Lewis have observed:

Frequently Diem's government ousted able and popular district and village officials with strong local ties from their positions in the rural areas because they had served the Viet-minh administration. They were replaced by outsiders who, in addition to lacking legitimacy in terms of customary local criteria, were all too often both oppressive and corrupt. Charged with the responsibility for carrying out Diem's agrarian policies, they also presided over denunciation campaigns and answered for those to the Saigon government rather than to the old village councils. It was inevitable that these newly appointed village chiefs would soon become the focal point for peasant resentment...⁸²

These tensions between "outside refugees" and local southerners were soon to arise as a result of RVN resettlement schemes. For example, immediately after the pacification of the Plain of Reeds was proclaimed, the RVN announced that some 150,000 hectares of rice land were now available for resettlement.⁸³ A Land Reform Office was

⁸¹ Kahin and Lewis, The United States in Vietnam, op.cit., p.104; This assertion has not been quantified however. It is unknown how many province chiefs were either/or Catholics and northerners and centrists. Most likely their influence was felt at province level, less so at district level and only slightly at the village level. Refugee villages, scattered throughout the Delta would have been headed by northerners and centrists. For influence at higher levels of government see: Roy Jumper, "Mandarin Bureaucracy and Politics in South Vietnam", Pacific Affairs (March 1957), Vol.XXX, No.1, p.56.

⁸² Kahin and Lewis, The United States in Vietnam, loc.cit.

⁸³ Voice of the Armed Forces in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 1115 GMT (May 10, 1956).

accordingly charged with responsibility for resettling refugees there; these were to include mainly persons from north of the 17th parallel as well as poor peasants from the south and disabled former servicemen. The seeds of future rural tension were accordingly planted.

E. U.S. Support for Diem

Leaders of the VWP had been constantly preoccupied with American support for the Diem government and the potential threat that this posed for them. It had been obvious for some time that France was no longer in a position to influence local events. A later Party history which reviewed this period concluded that "by mid-1956 the US-Diem clique eliminated the French and pro-French forces out of the important political and military and public security fields".⁸⁴ Diem, the review observed, was in full control of the administrative machinery from the central (i.e. Saigon) to the district level. In so far as VWP strategy had helped to encourage accommodation with this group, Diem's successes represented their failure.

The pattern of visits by high-level American representatives continued. The day after the French High Command was officially dissolved, Admiral Arleigh E. Burke, Chief of Naval Operations, arrived in Saigon to confer with the RVN President.⁸⁵ Immediately proceeding the July

⁸⁴ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.56.

⁸⁵ Associated Press dispatch from Saigon in The New York Times (April 30, 1956), p.2.

TABLE 5-6
VISITS TO SOUTH VIET-NAM BY SENIOR AMERICAN OFFICIALS
(April - September 1956)

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Name:</u>	<u>Position:</u>
April 29	Admiral A.E. Burke	Chief of Naval Operations
May 5	T.G. Gates J.H. Smith R.E. Rose	Undersecretary, Navy Assistant Secretary, Air Rear Admiral, USN
May 22-24	W.S. Robertson	Deputy Secretary, Defence
July 6-7	Richard M. Nixon	Vice President
July 26	Admiral A.W. Radford	Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff
August 17-September 7	General M. O'Daniel	ex-commander, TRIM
September 14	Admiral Felix Stump	Commander-in-Chief, US Navy (Pacific)

election deadline, and on the second anniversary of Diem in office, Vice President Richard Nixon arrived in Viet-Nam to extend an invitation to Ngo Dinh Diem to visit America at the request of President Eisenhower.⁸⁶ Table 5-6 summarizes the other delegations which called in at that time. The obvious conclusion that DRVN leaders drew from these facts was that the United States was expressing especially strong support for the state of Viet-Nam and its President.

⁸⁶ Dispatch by Robert Alden from Saigon in The New York Times (July 7, 1956).

V. THE "DIEU LANG" PHASE: POLITICAL STRUGGLE IN THE SOUTH
(July-September 1956)

Sometime during 1956, most probably during the month of June, the Nam Bo Regional Committee held its first congress.⁸⁷ This meeting thrashed out the Party's options for the period following the July election deadline. Western intelligence agencies had already detected indications that morale was on the decline and that disagreement over policy was spreading. One group advocated a resumption of armed struggle. Another group became so disillusioned that they ceased working and became inactive.

In one sense the Party was responsible as it had encouraged the belief that reunification elections would be held in mid-1956. When this deadline passed there was marked disappointment to be sure; perhaps more significantly however was the exposure of the Party's weakness in these circumstances. In other words, not only had the Party built up false hopes; but it pursued a policy which in the end exposed its powerlessness when the aspirations it had encouraged were not met. One official American government study sums up this point succinctly:

⁸⁷ According to Tinh Hinh Phong Trao; p.6 the Nam Bo Regional Committee met sometime in June to discuss the short-comings of the previous period of political struggle; according to the Republic of Vietnam, Ministry of National Defense, Joint General Staff, J2, Study of the Activation and Activities of R (Saigon: Combined Documentation Exploitation Center, 1969), No.075/69, p.14, which relies on captured documents, the Nam Bo Party Committee held meetings "first in 1956, second in 1957 and third in 1958"; these items and other items point to mid-1956 as the crucial period. Cf. Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0430 GMT, June 13, 1956.

The failure of 1956 was a severe blow to the morale of the Viet Cong organization in the South. Defections were numerous. Some broke away because of disillusion with the Hanoi regime, others because they realized that there was hope for a non-Communist orientation for their country [sic], still others because they opposed a new resort to force after the long years of fighting.⁸⁸

No records of the decisions taken at the first congress of the Nam Bo Regional Committee have as yet been made public. It seems probable that a draft of a major policy review ("On the Revolution in the South") was discussed. There is additional evidence too that Party leaders in the north had made it clear that nothing drastic should be undertaken. For example, one intelligence report stated that Party cadres in the south had received orders which stressed "an ideology of lying low for a long time".⁸⁹

In July the Party's newspaper Nhan Dan published a frank editorial on divisions within the VWP over southern strategy. Perhaps the editorial was a summary of major tendencies which emerged from the Regional Committee's congress. Whatever the case, other documents indicated that Party policy towards the south, which had been authoritatively set by the Politburo in September 1954, had remained virtually unchanged for nearly two years.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ United States Department of State, A Threat to Peace, op.cit., p.4.

⁸⁹ U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and National Security Council briefs of July 2nd and 19th, 1956 cited in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5., Tab 3, p.47, footnote 157.

⁹⁰ "From the end of 1954 until 1956 most of the Party regional committee's plans, under a resolution of this period, did not change", Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.30.

Since the Nhan Dan editorial specifically drew attention to the Politburo's September 1954 resolution and indicated that circumstances had changed in the meantime ("the implementation of the Geneva Agreement is encountering serious obstacles, peace is being threatened, national unification is facing big difficulties, and free general elections throughout the country cannot be materialized in July 1956")⁹¹ it seems reasonable to conclude that a major policy review was underway. No doubt the Central Committee's next scheduled plenum, the tenth, was the forum where these differences would be reconciled by a new policy formulation.

According to the editorial, during the Resistance War

[W]hen the struggle of our people met with difficulties, there often appeared in the minds of our people and cadres many complex emotions. When the Resistance began there were many doubts. Some people were not confident of victory, others were impatient and wanted to win quickly. When the situation changed and the Resistance dragged on there were fears of long hardships. People became impatient and subjective to the point of depression. Especially in campaigns in the enemy's rear areas where guerrilla warfare was carried on under cruel conditions. With the enemy's repeated mopping-up operations and our successive losses, pessimism and lack of confidence were prevalent. Similarly, when we won big battles on our main fronts, we easily became subjective.

A major experience, it can be said a principal experience, in ideological leadership at that time was the control of false and wrong ideas; the education and nurturing of the spirit of long resistance and the conquest of pessimism

⁹¹ "Nang Cao Chi Khi Phan Dau, Tich Cuc Cung Co Mien Bac Vung Manh, Tiep Tuc Dau Tranh De Gianh Thong Nhat Nuoc Nha", (Enhance the Will to Struggle, Actively Consolidate and Strengthen the North, Continue the Struggle for the Realization of National Unity) Nhan Dan, No.870 (July 22, 1956), pp.1 and 4. Unattributed quotations in the text are from this source.

and impatience. This was a decisive condition in the firm maintenance of the struggle to gain final victory.⁹²

In reviewing the present situation in which the armed struggle had been replaced by political struggle, Nhan Dan pointed out that similar "complex ideas and illusions" had arisen among the cadres. Four tendencies in particular were pointed out:

(1) There are a number of compatriots who have always been simple in their thoughts. They did not figure out all the schemes of the enemy and were therefore sure in their minds that when the two years time was over, elections would certainly be held. Subjective propaganda in a number of regions also helped breed this simplemindedness among a number of compatriots. The two years' time is over and the elections have not been realized. Hence some people have become pessimistic and disappointed.

(2) There are a number of compatriots who lack confidence in the future of the struggle for national unification because they see that the enemy is daily consolidating his forces and going all out to terrorize and massacre our compatriots in South Vietnam.

(3) There are a number of compatriots who believe in victory but do not believe in peaceful methods. We must understand that the reestablishment of peace in Indochina is an achievement for us and a defeat for the imperialist warmongers.

(4) Then there are a number of compatriots who believe in the final victory but are reluctant to carry on a long and hard struggle and who are anxious to find a more effective method of achieving national unification more quickly....

The editorial concluded, "[m]ore than ever before we must now intensify our tasks of propaganda and education among the people to patiently, deeply and widely control the above mentioned wrong ideas and false illusions. Thus we can enhance the will to struggle in the Party and among the people".

⁹² Ibid.

According to a Party history, in mid-1956 the Nam Bo Regional Committee considered information provided by the VWP Central Committee. Accordingly it reached the conclusion that South Viet-Nam was becoming a colony of the American imperialists, that Diem was establishing a fascist regime and that it was the duty of Vietnamese in Nam Bo to promote a revolutionary war against them. The Regional Committee's plans to reorganize and revitalize the Party's organization were later criticized for not giving greater emphasis to armed force. This same history written with the benefit of hindsight after the line had been changed to armed struggle stated:

The Regional Party Committee was also aware of the plans of the imperialists. It realized that the Nam Bo population had to promote a revolutionary war against them. However, it did not change its unfavorable political policies. It continued to motivate the people to participate in the struggles which requested negotiations and general elections.⁹³

As we have recounted earlier this approach ran afoul of the RVN's Anti-Communist Denunciation Campaign as well as the various military operations. One Party member reported that the Tay Ninh Party province committee had ninety percent of its cells smashed by the summer of 1956 and that a similar ratio prevailed across the country. In central Viet-Nam, he alleged, the situation was worse. The Party was just entering its "dark period" according to this source (a deputy secretary of the western Nam Bo inter-province committee) "because of a lack of faith in the

⁹³ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.30.

future and in the Party's judgment, which had proved [to be] completely wrong".⁹⁴ The situation was to grow worse over the ensuing months.

TABLE 5-7

PARTY-CONTROLLED MILITARY FORCES IN SOUTH VIET-NAM (July 1956)

CENTRAL VIET-NAM

Hue region	200	
Da-Nang area	900	
the Plateau region	300	
the coastal region	1,300	
sub-total:		2,700

SOUTHERN VIET-NAM

Sadec - Can Tho	300	
Plain of Reeds	600	
Western Ca-Mau	350	
War Zone D (north of Bien Hoa)	200	
Gia Dinh	150	
sub-total		1,600
TOTAL:		4,300

SOURCE: "The July 1956 Situation Report submitted by the U.S. Army Attache (Colonel L.B. Woodbury) in Saigon", Working Paper, Item 25-B; this should be compared with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency's National Intelligence Estimate, No.63-56 (July 17, 1956) which stated, "Reports on Communist strength in the south over the past year have ranged from 5,000 to 10,000. Our best estimate of current strength is 8,000 to 10,000 with approximately 5,000 organized in skeletal company and battalion sized units which could be expanded through recruitment. These armed forces are generally scattered through the mountains paralleling the Annam coast and the remote swampy regions of Cochin-China". Col. Woodbury commented in his report, "Above estimate [N = 4,300] is 1,300 larger than that contained in [the] May SITREP [Situation Report] but is still thought to be an optimistic estimate by this office".

(footnote 94 on p.285)

The attempt to rebuild the Party and to revitalize the Party-controlled military units were carried out under the slogan "to lie patiently in ambush, gathering one's forces, waiting to strike at the right moment [to bring about] the General Uprising to liberate southern Vietnam (truong ky mai phuc suc tich luc luong don lay thoi co tong khoi nghia giai phong mien nam)".⁹⁵ According to the U.S. Army attache stationed in Saigon at that time, the total "Viet Minh" military strength in southern Viet-Nam in July 1956 was 4,300 (see Table 5-7). Colonel Woodbury's estimate of 4,300 is very close to the CIA's estimate of "approximately 5,000 [Communist] organized in skeletal and battalion sized units" [see Table 5-7] thus suggesting that intelligence analysts were misleading themselves by applying so narrow a definition of what constituted Communist forces during this period. Their approach totally ignored the various categories of paramilitary and guerrilla forces which could be mobilized in support of main force units. Years later Pentagon analysts puzzling over the rapid growth of Communist military strength in 1960-61 concluded:

⁹⁴ Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., p.74; unfortunately the transcript of this interview is not contained in Race's Vietnamese Materials.

⁹⁵ A portion of this slogan was cited by Race in his War Comes to Long An, op.cit., p.39; the remainder of the slogan was provided to me by a ranking Communist Party cadre, Bui Cong Tuong, who was chief of the training and propaganda section of the Long-Chau-Ha tri-province committee. Tuong cited the slogan and when shown Race's version insisted that his was the correct (and most complete) one. Tuong was active in the political struggle movement in Ben Tre province in the period following the Geneva Conference; Interview with Bui Cong Tuong in the Ministry of Open Arms, Saigon, June 9, 1972.

The statistical picture...of an insurgent force declining in numbers from 1954 through 1959, and then mushrooming rapidly in 1960 and thereafter, is obviously misleading. What U.S. intelligence focused on in the immediate aftermath of Geneva were the remnants of the Viet Minh military force [i.e. PAVN] following regroupment. These, whatever their strength, probably represented only a fraction of the numbers of former Viet Minh in active opposition to the GVN [i.e. RVN] after 1956, and apparently did not reflect the total numbers of armed dissidents from 1957 onward, nor the locally recruited political and logistic apparatus which supported the Viet Cong [i.e. Party] "armed propaganda teams", or guerrilla bands. The phenomenal growth of the Viet Cong, given the low estimates on infiltration from North Vietnam (some 5,000 through 1960), means either that the DRV cadres were extraordinarily effective in organizing and motivating rural people among whom U.S. intelligence detected little unrest through mid-1960, or that U.S. estimates were low. The latter seems probable.⁹⁶

The Regional Committee was later criticized for its actions regarding these units. According to the Party history cited immediately above,

The Nam Bo Committee also decided to maintain the armed forces of the religious sects, but they did not activate any other forces. This meant that the Regional Party Committee did not thoroughly understand the role of the armed forces in the revolutionary struggle. The self-defense problem was not totally discussed because the Party did not have a clear view on the activation of many military forces...⁹⁷
(emphasis added)

⁹⁶ "U.S. Perceptions of the Insurgency, 1954-1960", in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab 4, p.26; Colonel Woodbury is identified as the author of the July 1956 SITREP in "Rebellion Against My-Diem", ibid., Tab 2, p.45, footnote 111. No mention is made in the SITREP of Long Khanh, Ba Ria, Binh Tuy, and Rung Sat, all Communist strongholds.

⁹⁷ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.30.

These criticisms, however, were made several years later and carried with them the considerable benefit of hindsight. In fact the Party's review of this period was commissioned to support the change over to armed struggle in 1959-60. In mid-1956 the Party was primarily concerned with problems in the north and the problems of the southern Party organization were accorded a lower priority. Its responsibility was to fashion a new long-haul strategy to keep the Party's underground infrastructure in being so that when priorities changed there would be an effective instrument in Nam Bo to execute them. Over the course of the next six months, most observers agree, the Nam Bo Committee concentrated its attention on reorganizing and building up its clandestine political organization.⁹⁸ According to a later RVN Ministry of Defence Study of this period, "[t]hat was the first step in the 'attention to the South' phase. Long-range preparations consisted of planting personnel in [the Saigon government bureaucracy], setting up agencies, and in particular, reorganizing political and military forces. The short-range preparations consisted of the promulgation of resolutions, strategies and guidelines in the armed struggle for the liberation of the South".⁹⁹

This extensive Party reorganization was expressed in the Vietnamese phrase "dieu lang". Cadres with legal status

⁹⁸ Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., p.39; Modelski, "The Viet Minh Complex", op.cit., p.198, and Donald S. Zagoria, Vietnam Triangle: Moscow/Peking/Hanoi (New York: Pegasus, 1967), p.116.

⁹⁹ Republic of Vietnam, Ministry of National Defense, Study of the Activation and Activities of R, op.cit., p.18.

were ordered to stop functioning and either move elsewhere (dieu - to flee) or remain quietly in place (lang - to be stationary). This marked the first phase of underground activity, according to Party historians, because for the first time the administrative machinery at province and district levels was under the control of the Diem government.¹⁰⁰ As the full weight of the anti-Communist campaign and the various military operations bore down on the Party, its effectiveness diminished. According to one account,

Party members gradually decreased in number. The key personnel in our organizations developed slowly. This prevented the Party from replenishing them. The remaining personnel had a large area of responsibility and much work to do. For that reason they were easily arrested or tracked down. Many Party members had to live in tunnels the year round. They only appeared at night.¹⁰¹

On the military front, as we have seen, the Party had been instructed not to recruit new units. No doubt senior leaders were reluctant to sanction such a development which inevitably would have increased the demand for additional supplies and material from the North. An American intelligence estimate, dated mid-1956, confirmed that although "some cadres and supplies are being infiltrated across the 17th parallel the D.R.V. [Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam] probably has not sent any large scale reinforcements or supply to the South".¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.5; according to Le Van Chan, as interviewed by Jeffrey Race, "there were numerous military campaigns in the rural areas, and the government began to install its village and hamlet apparatus in remote rural areas where the French never dared set foot", cited in War Comes to Long An, op.cit., p.99. Interview with Bui Cong Tuong, Saigon, June 9, 1972.

¹⁰¹ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.25.

¹⁰² U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Probable Developments in North and South Vietnam Through Mid-1957, (July 17, 1956) NIE No.63-56, op.cit., p.1077.

On July 22, 1956 leaflets appeared announcing the formation of a Vietnamese People's Liberation Movement (Phong Trao Giai Phong Nhan Dan Viet Nam). The announcement did not link this Movement (phong trao, not "front" mat tran) to the Party or its Nam Bo Regional Committee.¹⁰³ However if the newly founded Liberation Movement was Party-inspired it undoubtedly was a cover name for the amalgam of remnant sect forces now under Party control. The stated aims of the Movement included the overthrow of the Diem government, the creation of a democratic government and peaceful national reunification. Yet references in the leaflet linking "national and international" opposition forces hint at the involvement of sect and/or pro-French opposition elements. Very little has been heard of this group subsequently.

The main military activity engaged in by the Nam Bo Regional Committee, besides quartering and reorganizing the sect remnants, was the formation of self-defence units "aimed at countering bandits, uniting the people, maintaining order and security in the hamlets, and

¹⁰³ According to Race, War Comes to Long An, p.85, "During this period in the Long An area, much of the Party's political activity...was carried on under the name of 'The Vietnamese People's Liberation Movement', which appeared in 1956"; the document in question is a hand written one which could have been prepared by anyone as it bears no distinctive markings or identifying features; no doubt the Diemist Cong An (Security Service) considered all opponents of the government, especially armed elements, as Communist thus confusing the point being made here. Cf. "Hieu Trieu Goi Dong Bao Quoc Noi va Ha Ngoai", (Appeal to Compatriots at Home and Abroad) contained in Race, compiler, Vietnamese Materials, Microfilm Reel No.1, Race document No.1001.

opposing the enemy's terrorism and robbery by the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai forces".¹⁰⁴

VI. THE 10th PLENUM (September 1956)

According to the historian Ta Xuan Linh "the leaders in Nam Bo compiled an important document at the end of 1956 entitled 'On the Revolution in South Viet Nam'".¹⁰⁵ As Linh's account appears to be authoritative, it seems likely that William Turley is in error when he concluded that the document in question was written by the VWP Central Committee "to answer pressures from the South".¹⁰⁶ Turley also appears to be in error when he suggests that "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam" was approved at the VWP's 10th Plenum as the copy of the document which he used¹⁰⁷ makes reference to the "recent" American presidential elections held in November, two months later.

As early as March-April 1956, as we have seen, VWP cadres assigned to the South (Le Duan in particular) had

¹⁰⁴ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.16.

¹⁰⁵ Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet Nam", op.cit., p.22.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., Linh, a historian in the DRVN, was writing in the semi-official English-language journal Vietnam Courier; he has also published in Nghien Cuu Lich Su (Historical Research) the official organ of the DRVN Social Science Committee; Turley, "Army, Party and Society in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, op.cit., p.123, footnote 79 and 127.

¹⁰⁷ Turley used a copy of the document entitled "Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam" (The Path of Revolution in the South) contained in the Race collection of Vietnamese Materials, Microfilm Reel No.1, Race document No.1002.

voiced misgivings about the Party's policy for the region. Both the state of the Party's organization and morale took a decided turn for the worse throughout the course of the year. After the July election deadline had passed serious dissent arose within the Party's ranks. For example, one Party history stated:

Particularly after July 20, 1956 the key cadres and Party members in South Vietnam asked questions which demanded answers: Can we still continue the struggle to demand the implementation of the Geneva Agreement given the existing regime in South Vietnam? If not, what must be done? A mood of skepticism and nonconfidence in the orientation of the struggle began to seep into the Party apparatus and among some of the masses.¹⁰⁸

As a result of this situation the most plausible view appears to be that Le Duan and other senior cadres were requested to prepare a reassessment, with policy recommendations, for review by the Central Committee. By this time it had become customary for the VWP to hold bi-annual sessions of the Central Committee. It is possible that a draft document on Nam Bo could have been prepared for submission at the 10th Plenum, which met in September (1956). Although this may very well have been the case much more important issues pre-empted a full discussion of these proposals. They were then rescheduled for discussion at the next plenum which, as it turns out, met only three months later in December. In the meantime the Politburo gave the matter its attention. The 11th Plenum marks the first time since July 1954 that three plenary sessions

¹⁰⁸ Working Paper, Appendices, Item 301, pp.2-3.

of the Central Committee were convened in one year,¹⁰⁹ a situation which was not to be repeated until 1959. The 10th Plenum dealt with pressing problems arising from the agrarian reform movement while the 11th Plenum, convened to discuss the turmoil in Nghe An province, also approved policy changes affecting the South.

It is not necessary to review in detail the course of the agrarian reform movement conducted by the VWP since 1953 which has now provoked such controversy.¹¹⁰ We need

109 For example:

1954: 6th plenum (July)
 1955: 7th plenum (March) 8th plenum (August)
 1956: 9th plenum (April) 10th plenum (September)
 11th plenum (December)
 1957: 12th plenum (March) 13th plenum (December)
 1958: 14th plenum (November)
 1959: 15th plenum (January) 16th plenum (April)
 17th plenum (October)
 1960: 18th plenum (July)

110 There are two major points to be made with respect to the literature on land reform: (1) it demonstrates that the crisis in the North was a very serious one which fully preoccupied Party leaders; and (2) all the figures on the numbers of persons executed or otherwise killed are either pure guesswork and/or to some extent based on mistranslations and "black propaganda" (Nguyen Manh Tuong speech). The following list are some of the more pertinent sources in this controversy (compiled chronologically): Fall, The Viet-Minh Regime, op.cit., pp.119-138; J. Price Gittinger, "Communist Land Policy in North Viet Nam", Far Eastern Survey (August 1959), Vol.XXVIII, No.8, pp.113-126; Gerard Tongas, J'ai Vecu dans l'Enfer Communiste au Nord Vietnam et J'ai Choisi la Liberte (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Debresse, 1960); Honey, North Vietnam Today, op.cit., pp.105-127 (chapters by William Kaye and Hoang Van Chi); Hoang Van Chi, From Colonialism to Communism, op.cit.; George Carver, "The Faceless Viet Cong", Foreign Affairs (April 1966), Vol.44, pp.347-372; Hoang Van Chi, Tu Thuc Dan Den Cong San [From Colonialism to Communism] (Saigon: Chan Troi Moi, 1966); Buttinger, A Dragon Embattled, op.cit., Vol.2, chapter 11; Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, op.cit., chapter 8; Christine White, Land Reform in North Vietnam (Washington, D.C.: Agency for International Development, Spring Review Country Paper, June 1970); Anita L. Nutt, On the Question of Communist Reprisals in Vietnam, p.4416 (Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation, August 1970); Diane Johnstone

cont'd

only observe that after the partitioning of Viet-Nam the VWP was given control over land and people which had previously been outside the Party's sphere of influence. In trying to grapple with the myriad of problems in rural areas after 1954 the Party chose to compress into fewer stages its program for agrarian reform. The chosen instruments for this phase were specially created agrarian reform teams which drew their membership and authority from outside the existing local Party organization. In November 1955 the crucial fifth wave of mass mobilization for agrarian reform was launched. Disastrously, as it turned out, the Party decided to graft onto this wave another campaign designed to weed out spies, reactionaries, and counter-revolutionaries.

110 (cont'd)

interview with Nguyen Huu Chau, dispatch from Orleans, France in St. Louis Post-Dispatch (September 24, 1972), p.2A; D. Gareth Porter, The Myth of the Bloodbath: North Vietnam's Land Reform Reconsidered, International Relations of East Asia Project, Interim Report No.2 (Ithaca: Cornell University, September 1972); Robert F. Turner, "Expert Punctures 'No Bloodbath' Myth", Human Events (November 11, 1972); "The Human Cost of Communism in Vietnam, II: The Myth of No Bloodbath", Hearing Before The Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, 93rd Congress, 1st Session, January 5, 1973. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973); Daniel E. Teodoru, "The Bloodbath Hypothesis: The Maoist Pattern in North Vietnam's Radical Land Reform", Southeast Asian Perspectives (March 1973), No. 9, pp.1-79; "Testimony of D. Gareth Porter", op.cit.; D. Gareth Porter, "The Myth of the Bloodbath: North Vietnam's Land Reform Reconsidered", Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars (September 1973), Vol.5, No.2, pp.2-15; Christine P. White, "Critique of U.S. Senate Hearing: The Human Cost of Communist in Vietnam, II: The Myth of No Bloodbath", typescript (November 1973); and White, "Land Reform in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam", op.cit.; Edwin E. Moise, "Land Reform and Land Reform Errors in North Vietnam", Pacific Affairs (Spring 1976), Vol.49, No.1, pp.70-92.

As the agrarian reform movement proceeded it was evident that the quality of administrative cadres was sadly lacking. Errors and mistakes were committed and numerous individuals were erroneously punished and even imprisoned. By early April 1956 the first murmurs of dissent were heard. These protests and grievances were acknowledged in the Party press over the next few months but still the VWP made no major effort to halt or to overcome these mistakes. By mid-year it was evident that serious problems were being created which were affecting both the Party (and its inner workings) as well as the relations between the rural folk and local Party organs.

On August 17, 1956 Ho Chi Minh, the DRVN President, candidly admitted that

[S]ome cadres do not yet comprehend the policies and correctly cultivate the mass line. Because the Party Central Committee and Government leadership have had substantial weaknesses... land reform has caused deficiencies and errors in the tasks of achieving rural unity...lll

Ho went on to acknowledge these errors and announced that the Central Committee had already formulated plans to "rectify" them. Those who had been wrongly classified would be correctly reclassified; those who had been wrongly punished would have their grievances attended to (dismissed cadres would reinstated, political rights restored, etc.).

lll "Thu cua Ho Chu Tich Goi Dong Bao Nong Thon va Can Bo Nhan Dip Cai Cach Ruong Dat o Mien Bac Can Ban Thanh Cong" [Letter to Rural Compatriots and Cadres from President Ho on the Occasion of the Basic Success of Land Reform in North Vietnam], Nhan Dan, No.897 (August 18, 1956), p.1.

These and other errors were publicly discussed by Ho on DRVN National Day (September 2nd) and in the Party press.¹¹²

Sometime during late September, most likely after the VWP delegation returned from the 8th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (which ended on September 27th),¹¹³

112 For Ho Chi Minh's speech see Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0030 GMT (September 2, 1956); "Let Us Positively Carry Out the Appeal Launched by President Ho", Nhan Dan (September 6, 1956) broadcast by the Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT (September 6, 1956); the full weight of these admissions was given by Vo Nguyen Giap in a speech to the public (and not at the 10th 'congress' [read plenum] as is often alleged in the literature) on October 29, 1956; remarkably no complete translation of this speech exists in English and those author's who have relied on Hoang Van Chi's selective and erroneous translation have been seriously misled, see D. Gareth Porter, "The Myth of the Bloodbath", Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars, op.cit., p.9 for a partial list of corrections; for the original consult Vo Nguyen Giap, "Bai Noi Chuyen Cua Dong Chi Vo-Nguyen-Giap Uy Vien Bo Chinh Tri Trung Uong Dang Lao Dong Viet-Nam Ve Nghi Quyet Cua Hoi Nghi Trung Uong Lan Thu 10 tai cuoc mit tinh 29-10-1956 cua Nhan Dan Thu Do" [Speech by Comrade Vo Nguyen Giap, Member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Viet-Nam Workers' Party, Concerning the Resolution of the 10th Plenary Session of the Central Committee, delivered at a meeting of the people of the capital on October 29, 1956], Nhan Dan, No.970 (October 31, 1956), pp.1-3.

113 The 8th Congress of the CCP lasted until September 27th and was attended by a delegation of the VWP led by Hoang Quoc Viet, a reference in the communique of the 10th plenum hailing the success of the 20th Congress of the CPSU as well as the 8th Congress of the CCP suggests the VWP convened a meeting the Central Committee immediately after the Chinese Congress finished; for an account of the 8th Congress consult, Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Documents, 3 volumes (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1956) and "A Congress of Great Historic Significance", editorial in the People's Daily (September 29, 1956) reprinted in People's China, No.20 (October 16, 1956), pp.4-8.

the VWP held its 10th Plenum. The decisions taken at this meeting were indeed momentous for on October 29th the VWP held an unprecedented press conference at which it released a communique reporting on the plenum's decisions. This communique was blunt and to the point:

besides the great success obtained mistakes and shortcomings have been committed during the past period. In agrarian reform and the readjustment of organizations, grave mistakes have been committed. The 10th plenum of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party has analyzed the results of land reform and the readjustment of organizations and carried out a stern examination of the mistakes committed in these two tasks. It has found the causes of these mistakes and has adopted measures for correcting them.¹¹⁴

The communique then went on to enumerate the errors and mistakes committed in the movement for rent reduction, the agrarian reform campaign and in the readjustment of organizations. They were labelled "leftist deviations" primary blame for which was attached to "shortcomings in leadership". Specifically,

[t]he 10th session of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party "recognizes that these mistakes are due to shortcomings in leadership". That is why the Central Committee of the Party bears responsibility for these mistakes. The Central Committee members directly responsible for the mistakes committed in the guidance of the execution of the Party's policies have made a self-criticism of their mistakes and shortcomings before the Central Committee. The latter has taken appropriate disciplinary measures against these members.

¹¹⁴ "Thong Cao cua Hoi Nghi Lan Thu 10 (mo rong) cua Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Lao Dong Viet-Nam" [Communique of the 10th enlarged Session of the Central Executive Committee of the Viet-Nam Workers' Party], Nhan Dan, No.900 (October 30, 1956), p.1 and 4.

Separate announcements carried the startling news that Truong Chinh had resigned his post as VWP Secretary General;¹¹⁵ that Ho Viet Thang, the head of the Standing Committee of the Party group on the Central Land Reform Committee, had been dismissed from the Central Committee; and that Le Van Luong, head of the Central Organization Board (and therefore in charge of overseeing the readjustment of organizations at the local level) had been stripped of his membership in the VWP's Politburo as well as his membership on the Central Committee's Secretariat.¹¹⁶

According to the press conference communique,^{*} three other issues were discussed at the 10th Plenum: (1) questions of democratic practice, liberties and legality; (2) improvement in the standard of living for workers, army personnel, cadres and civil servants; and (3) the struggle for the reunification of Viet-Nam "on the basis of independence, democracy and by peaceful means". Point three was the only

115 "Thong Cao cua Hoi Nghi Lan Thu 10 cua Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Lao Dong Viet-Nam Ve Viac Cu Lai Tong Bi Thu Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong" [Communique of the 10th Plenary Session of the Central Executive Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party Concerning the Appointment of the Secretary General of the Central Executive Committee], Nhan Dan, No.900 (October 30, 1956), p.1.

116 "Thong Cao Cua Hoi Nghi Lan Thu 10 cua Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Lao Dong Viet-Nam ve Viac Thi Hanh Ky Luat Doi Voi Nhung Dong Chi Uy Vien Trung Uong Pham Sai Lam Trong Viac Chi Dao Cong Tac Cai Cach Ruong Dat va Chinh Don To Chuc" [Communique of the 10th Plenary Session of the Central Executive Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party Concerning Carrying Out Discipline Towards Comrade Members of the Central Committee for Mistakes in the Work of Carrying Out the Tasks of Agrarian Reform and Reorganization of Organizations] Nhan Dan, No.900 (October 30, 1956), p.1.

indication that southern affairs had been discussed. No decisions were announced. The final sections of the communique made it clear that these and other pressing issues were now the responsibility of the Politburo. In the words of the communique: "[t]o prepare for the next session of the Central Committee, the 10th Plenum has entrusted the Politburo with preparing a plan on two important problems: (1) the line and policy of economic construction in the North and (2) the convening of the Third Congress of the Party".

According to later American intelligence analysis several other leadership changes took place at this time which went unannounced.¹¹⁷ Reportedly six new members were added to the Politburo. However there is reason to question this information.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, the post of Part Secretary

¹¹⁷ U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, National Intelligence Survey - South Viet-Nam, NIS 43C (April 1965), p.26 cited in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab 3, p.6; according to this report Pham Hung, Nguyen Duy Trinh, Le Thanh Nghi, Hoang Van Hoan, Ha Huy Giap and Ton Duc Thang were added while Nguyen Luong Bang and Hoang Quoc Viet were dropped.

¹¹⁸ William C. Gausmann, former editor of Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes, has raised this matter in a letter to me dated July 3, 1974. He wrote: "What really is the evidence? I doubt that [Nguyen Luong] Bang was ever a Politburo member. Hoang Quoc Viet indeed was and was dropped at that time. I wonder very much if [Ton Duc] Thang and Ha Huy Giap were given Politburo status from 1956 to 1960 and then dropped. (This, oddly enough, is recognized in pecking order lists, with [Hoang Quoc] Viet appearing first after Politburo and secretariat members. If, for example H.H. [sic] Giap had been on the Politburo even he'd probably rate similar treatment - but he never gets it.) What would have been the point of dropping [Ton Duc] Thang just as he was being made vice president of the Republic?" The point to be made is that in at least one case, Hoang Quoc Viet, an unannounced leadership change took place. There may have been others.

General was filled by Ho Chi Minh, thus lending the full force of his popularity to the embattled VWP organization. Whatever the exact leadership realignment it seems reasonable to conclude that if a major report on Nam Bo had been presented to the 10th Plenum that action on it was passed to the Politburo for decision. The Politburo itself would have been in a considerable state of disorganization as a result of these leadership changes. Thus in addition to the suggestions made above, it appears probable that the document "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam" while it might have been discussed in draft form at the 10th Plenum was probably reviewed by the Politburo in the interim before being presented to the 11th Plenum in December.¹¹⁹

Following the 10th Plenum a campaign for the rectification of errors was launched throughout northern Vietnam. Although the campaign was never officially declared completed it seems certain that it continued well beyond its projected deadline. According to J. Price Gittinger it was not until November 1957 that "the mistakes correction [campaign] had progressed to the point where it was no longer necessary or worthwhile to stress the program".¹²⁰

In the midst of this preoccupation it is surprising to note that the Politburo - sometime in mid to late October - met and discussed the situation in Nam Bo. The

¹¹⁹ Thayer, "Origin of the National Liberation Front", op.cit., Part II, pp.12-15.

¹²⁰ Gittinger, "Communist Land Policy in North Vietnam", op.cit., p.122.

evidence of this topic is somewhat circumstantial. We have just hypothesized that the Politburo was entrusted with this responsibility in advance of the 11th Plenum. Prior to this meeting several statements on South Viet-Nam appeared in the Party-controlled press which revealed that some high-level discussions were going on. Since we now have authoritative confirmation that "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam" was compiled at the end of 1956 it seems most likely that it was this policy review which was being discussed.

On October 31st Nhan Dan commented editorially", [o]n reviewing the causes of these mistakes [including inter alia the struggle for national reunification] the [10th] plenary session of the Central Committee realized that for some time there had been a number of ideological deviations in the leadership of our Party".¹²¹ This was the first time that the leadership dismissals were ascribed to mistakes committed in carrying out the Party's reunification policies. At that same time a conference of the Viet-Nam Fatherland Front was convened. Tran Cong Truong gave a report on, among other things, "the struggle for national unity".¹²² Later the conference reached agreement on

¹²¹ "Doan Ket Nhat Tri, Kien Quyet Chap Hanh Nghi Quyet Cua Hoi Nghi Trung Uong Lan Thu 10" [Unite Unanimously and Resolutely Implement the Resolutions of the 10th Session of the Central Committee] Nhan Dan (October 30, 1956), No.900, p.1.

¹²² "Thong Cao Cua Hoi Nghi Uy Ban Trung Uong Mat Tran To Quoc Viet-Nam", [Communique of the Conference of the Central Committee of the Viet-Nam Fatherland Front] Nhan Dan (November 3, 1956), No.973, pp.1 and 4.

several points - after heated discussions according to one account¹²³ - among which was the following:

[Point 3] The conference noted that during these last two years...the movement for Viet-Nam's unification...has achieved some success. Nevertheless, there have been many mistakes in the consolidation of the North and the maintenance of the struggle in the South (emphasis added).¹²⁴

Accordingly the Fatherland Front adopted a number of "concrete measures" to help restore North-South relations in all fields as well as the strengthening of "the activities of the Action Committee of the Central Committee of the Front on behalf of Vietnam's reunification".¹²⁵

In other words, the Politburo had now acknowledged that there were defects in its policy towards the South and had made this assessment available to its principal instrument for achieving national reunification, the Fatherland Front. Thus these public comments by Party-controlled organs merely foreshadowed further changes in leadership as well as policy towards Nam Bo. Unfortunately at the same time, from the point of view of VWP officials assigned to Nam Bo, developments in the north were to intrude once again claiming top priority.

¹²³ Mentioned in radio reports but not in the press; Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 1200 GMT, November 2, 1956.

¹²⁴ "Thong Cao Cua Hoi Nghi Uy Ban Trung Uong Mat Tran To Quoc Viet Nam", op.cit., p.4.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER 6

POLICY REVISION: ON THE REVOLUTION IN SOUTH VIETNAM (October-December 1956)

I. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE NORTH: REVOLT AND CRITICISM

A. The "Rectification of Errors" Campaign

During the last quarter of 1956 VWP leaders grappled with problems occasioned by the failure of their policy on reunification in the south as well as errors and mistakes arising from the conduct of the land reform campaign in the north. The former was dealt with in a comprehensive policy review entitled "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam" while a "rectification of errors" campaign was instituted to alleviate grievances arising from the latter.

Ever since the VWP agreed to the partitioning of Viet-Nam it was confronted with a built in tension of coordinating policies designed to grapple with problems of reconstruction and rehabilitation in the north with others which addressed the difficulties of political struggle in the south. The VWP has always accorded priority to developing the North yet this was not meant to be at the expense of the South. Rather the problem (for the VWP) was to determine how much emphasis was to be placed on each separate yet interrelated policy at a given moment.

The policy decisions incorporated in "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam" reflected this dilemma. At the precise time when policy decisions were being made on southern strategy, events in the north were crying out

for immediate attention. In short, priority continued to be assigned to building up the North so that at some future time it could serve as a reliable and firm base for the struggle in the South. Since the North's "firm foundation" was in fact a very shaky edifice at that time, the new policy for the South had to take this into account. In other words, the new policy presaged nothing drastic for the immediate future.

According to an official party history of the period since the Geneva Conference the "greatest difficulty" encountered in the "liberated North" was the state of the economy.¹ It was both backward and war ravaged. In fact the North was faced with severe shortage in foodstuffs and a possible famine. Therefore the party set two tasks to be fulfilled: (1) the completion of the land reform (begun in 1953) and (2) the rehabilitation of the national economy. Of the two, land reform was deemed a "fundamental strategic task" which had to be thoroughly completed. "Land reform" in practice combined four interrelated elements: (1) classification and distribution of land; (2) the implementation of the party's so called "democratic principles"; (3) the reorganization of the party's apparatus and (4) the suppression of counter-revolutionaries. "By the summer of 1956", as the above mentioned party history observed, "the land reform had been completed in the lowlands and midlands and a number of villages in the

¹An Outline History of the Viet Nam Workers' Party,
op.cit., p.82.

highlands of our north".² However by that time the Party found itself enmeshed in a paradox. On the one hand, as a result of the reform campaign, paddy production was boosted to an all-time high (see Table 6-1), on the other hand, serious errors had been committed which vitally effected the party's organization at the local level.

Concerning the former point J. Price Gittinger observed in 1959: "all the evidence indicates that the Communists have carried out their land tenure policy without seriously interfering with rice production - even during the open reaction to the land reform excesses of 1956. In the period since the Geneva Agreements, in fact, North Vietnam has apparently been able to increase rice production appreciably over the prewar level".³

Immediately after the 10th Plenum, VWP officials made forthright statements concerning the mistakes which had been committed. The DRVN's Council of Ministers, meeting under the chairmanship of Ho Chi Minh, immediately suspended the authority of the central and local land reform committees, converting them into "study organs ... directly subordinate to their respective levels of the

² Ibid., p.83; Burchett, North of the 17th Parallel, op.cit., p.102-133.

³ Gittinger, "Communist Land Policy in North Viet Nam", op.cit., p.125.

TABLE 6-1

PADDY PRODUCTION IN THE DRVN, 1939-1960

YEAR	<u>Vo Nhan Tri</u> ^a	<u>B.B. Fall</u> ^b	<u>W. Kaye</u> ^c	<u>J.P. Gittinger</u> ^d	<u>E. Kux</u> ^e
1939	2.4	2.45	-	-	2.45
1940	-	-	-	3.3	-
1943	-	-	-	2.9	-
1944	-	2.28	-	-	-
1945	-	3.77	-	-	-
1954	-	2.60	-	2.6	-
1955	3.5	3.60	3.60	3.6	3.52
1956	4.1	4.24	4.15	4.1	4.14
1957	3.9	3.89	3.95	4.0	3.95
1958	4.6	4.58	4.55	4.1	4.58
1959	5.2	5.11	5.20	-	5.19
1960	4.2	4.15	4.40	-	4.21

SOURCES:

^aVo Nhan Tri, Croissance economique de la Republique democratique du Viet Nam (Hanoi: Editions en langues etrangeres, 1967), pp.215 and 293.

^bBernard B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, 2nd Revised Edition, p.163.

^cWilliam Kaye, "A Bowl of Rice Divided: The Economy of North Vietnam", in P.J. Honey, editor, North Vietnam Today, p.116.

^dJ. Price Gittinger, "Communist Land Policy in North Vietnam", Far Eastern Survey (August 1959), p.125.

^eErnest Kux, "Nordvietnam", in Ernst Kux and J.C. Kun, Die Satelliten Pekings: Nordvietnam, Nordkorea (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1964), p.78.

No doubt these sources are highly interdependent as they have relied on official DRVN statistics as well as figures appearing in Soviet publications.

(local) administration".⁴ The Special Land Reform tribunals were suspended and the immediate release from jail of all those "wrongly imprisoned due to incorrect classification" was ordered.

These actions were then followed by a full-blown campaign to rectify the errors committed during the course of the land reform campaign. Generally these mistakes can be grouped under three main headings:

(1) errors in carrying out agrarian reform, (2) errors in the extension of "democracy" and (3) errors in the readjustment of organizations.

(a) Errors in the conduct of the rent reduction and agrarian reform campaigns

According to the Party's own admission the basic problem in this area was the nature and composition of the agrarian reform committees which relied on outside cadres in alliance with the local poor peasants. Together they failed "to apply the land reform laws and regulations".⁵ In practice this meant that too many landlords were classified as reactionaries or saboteurs and that too many other individuals were upgraded in classification

⁴ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, November 2, 1956; "Nghì Quyét của Hội Đồng Chính Phủ Về Máy Chính Sách Của The De Sua Chua Sai Lam Ve Cai Cach Ruong Dat va Chinh Don To Chuc" [Resolution of the Council of Ministers Concerning Several Concrete Policies on the Rectification of Land Reform Errors and Readjustment of Organizations] Nhan Dan, (November 7, 1956), No.977, pp.1-2.

⁵ Ibid., p.1.

into the landlord category. As a result of this bias, which was accomplished in some cases on the basis of false documentation and extortion, various individuals were subjected to corporal punishment, false arrest, imprisonment, loss of civil rights, confiscation of property and even execution.⁶

It was obvious from the compensatory measures that the Party's main concern was the maintenance of the rural alliance of all classes in the period after landlord control had been broken. It was not the Party's intention to jail or execute the entire landlord class but to punish those who were found guilty of certain crimes. The remaining landlords and rich peasants not in this category were liable to property and goods confiscation and redistribution. However the systematic bias described above seriously threatened the position of those groups on whom the Party had relied in the past. For example, the Party was now preoccupied with restoring the rights and privileges of families who included among their members

⁶ Ibid.; Vo Nguyen Giap, "Bai Noi Chuyen Cua Dong Chi Vo Nguyen Giap Ve Nghi Quyet Cua Hoi Nghi Trung Uong Lan Thu 10" [Speech by Comrade Vo Nguyen Giap Concerning the Resolution of 10th Plenum of the Central Committee], Nhan Dan, (October 31, 1956), No.960, pp.1-3; there is considerable debate over the precise meaning of Giap's use of the words "xu tri" (to execute or to discipline) nevertheless even those who translate xu tri as "to discipline" do not deny that some executions took place. See: D. Gareth Porter, The Myth of the Bloodbath: North Vietnam's Land Reform Reconsidered, op.cit., pp.54-55; and H.C. Taussig, "Land Reform Abuses", South China Morning Post, November 28, 1956, p.15; Taussig visited North Viet-Nam where he held a long discussion with Ho Chi Minh in November 1956. He concluded, "The landlords received very harsh treatment and in several cases - nobody apparently has any figures relating to that question in Hanoi - were executed by the peasants".

war dead, war heroes, war wounded, and disabled veterans, demobilized or discharged troops and men presently serving in the armed forces.

Demobilized and discharged troops were now treated as "revolutionary military personnel" even if they were landlords or children of landlords.⁷ They therefore became eligible for membership in the locally powerful peasants associations where they exerted an influence on the political, social and economic affairs of the village.

In cases where family members had been mistakenly classified as landlords, the rectification campaign now decreed that they be given favourable treatment. This included immediate release from jail, the restoration of all political rights and adequate compensation for land and other property already distributed. Readjustments were to be made in the estimates of crop area and land yield on which both classification and tax computation were based. In cases where landlord families had been left with insufficient land on which to live (thus making them "poor and hungry") additional land was to be given to them.

Serious errors had also been committed in the case of church and pagoda owned land. Several religious institutions had been seized and their buildings used as

⁷ "Nghĩ Quyết của Hội Đồng Chính Phủ Về Máy Chỉnh Sạch Cũ The De Sua Sai Lam Ve Cai Cach Ruong Dat Va Chinh Don To Chuc", op.cit.

headquarters for the local land reform committees.⁸ These buildings were now returned. In cases where the amount of church and pagoda land expropriated exceeded the limits set by law (thus rendering it impossible for a church or pagoda to maintain itself) the excess was to be returned. Errors were also committed in the ethnic minority areas. According to Vo Nguyen Giap "We indiscriminately attacked the upper class showing no respect for and even encroaching upon local customs and mores".⁹

Cadres who had been mis-classified and punished by loss of political rights were now released and supposedly reassigned to suitable missions. They were also granted compensation.

(b) Errors in Implementing Democracy

Interwoven with these mistakes were errors which violated "democratic legality". By this is meant both procedural and physical breaches of the law. Religious freedom, for example, was violated. Catholics in some areas were systematically excluded from the peasants'

⁸ Ibid.; see also: Vietnam News Agency in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 0517 GMT, November 20, 1956 which reports on an enlarged meeting of the National Catholic Liaison Committee held to discuss the communique of the Council of Ministers; and "Sua Sai O Vung Tong Giao" [Correcting Errors in Religious Regions], Nhan Dan, (November 29, 1956), No.999, p.1.

⁹ Giap, "Bai Noi Chuyen Cua Dong Chi Vo Nguyen Giap Ve Nghi Quyet Cua Hoi Nghi Trung Uong Lan Thu 10", op.cit.

association because of their religion.¹⁰ Various legal processes were ignored thus denying persons their freedom of speech and movement.

During the rectification of errors campaign a great deal of attention was focused on the ambiguity and ill-defined nature of the relationship between people's security organs, the judiciary and other management and/or administrative organizations. Apparently the muddled nature of these relations lent itself to abuse including false arrest and "erroneous disciplinary measures".

The National Assembly was now designated the "people's supreme organ" with the responsibility to spell out in laws and regulations, the precise nature of democracy in the DRVN.¹¹ Elections were scheduled for 1957 to elect people's councils and administrative committees.

(c) Errors in the Readjustment of Organizations

According to criticism published at this time the Party had been seriously remiss in exercising "democracy". Locally the "cult of the individual" or "individual dictatorship" served to stifle collective leadership.¹² Various cadres were accused of not exercising "close

¹⁰ "Nghị Quyết Của Hội Đồng Chính Phủ Về Máy Chỉnh Sạch Cu The De Sua Chua Sai Lam Ve Cai Cach Ruong Dat Va Chinh Don To Chuc", op.cit.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² "Doan Ket Nhat Tri, Kien Quiet Chap Hanh Nghi Quiet Cua Hoi Nghi Trung Uong Lan Thu 10" [United Unanimously and Determinedly Execute the Resolution of the 10th Plenum of the Central Committee] Nhan Dan, (October 10, 1956), No.969, p.1.

leadership" of the land reform campaign, thus permitting a slack investigation during the crucial phase of classification. These cadres were accused of subjectiveness, complacency and authoritarianism and of not actively seeking the people's participation. They were accused of imposing wrong disciplinary measures on cadres, party members and ordinary people thus seriously weakening the efficiency of the Party at the local level.¹³

According to Gittinger the rectification of errors campaign did not really begin until January 1957, the period from October 30 until then (phase 1) being devoted to a crash survey of the damage and the release from jail of wrongly classified and imprisoned peasants and cadres.

The Vietnam News Agency, for example, stated that by November 20 the following three steps had been completed:¹⁴

1. The first step has been taken in the re-adjustment of organizations, those who suffered from erroneous disciplinary measures have been released, and the correction of crop area and land yield estimates has been made.
2. With regard to the second step, involving the release of detained working persons who suffered from erroneous disciplinary measures, this has been carried out in various places.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Vietnam News Agency in Vietnamese morse to Vietnam, 0900 GMT, November 28, 1956.

3. The third step, that is, the stage of releasing landowners who were classified as reactionaries has been carried out ... most of the cadres and Party members who suffered from erroneous measures in the third inter-zone have been set free.

Gittinger's second phase was divided into two parts. The first, the reclassification of peasants, was to be completed by Tet, in February 1957. The second part, the restitution of property erroneously expropriated and/or the making of suitable compensation, was to be completed by March 1957. Phase II was to be a recapitulation and review of the entire campaign. A variety of problems arose which disrupted this schedule, some involving tension and even violence between the old cadres (who had suffered during the land reform campaign) and new cadres (who led the land reform campaign and who were expected to rectify their errors).¹⁵ In addition, there was some foot-dragging on the part of some who resisted the reclassification of those incorrectly punished. In August Nhan Dan was moved to query why the rectification campaign was moving so slowly.¹⁶

There can be no doubt that the land reduction and land reform campaigns were successful in their objectives:

¹⁵ Gittinger, "Communist Land Policy in North Vietnam", op.cit., pp.120-121; for a discussion of the "old cadres" versus the "new cadres" see Hoang Van Chi, From Colonialism to Communism, op.cit., pp.226-233.

¹⁶ Nhan Dan, August 20, 1957 quoted in Gittinger, op.cit., p.122.

boosting economic production and breaking the control exercised by rich peasants and landlords on the rural masses. This success, however, was accompanied by a great deal of turmoil and disruption. This was serious enough to cause the VWP to divert its attention for a period of several months to rectify the errors committed in its name. Various scholars and observers have tried to estimate the human cost involved: did as few as 185 or 800-2,500 die or did as many as 15,000; 50,000 or 500,000 perish?¹⁷ It seems that a great deal of emotionalism, poor scholarship and even malicious bias may have gone into these estimates. For our purpose we need only observe that at that time as a result of the land reform campaign the North's foundation was not yet firm enough to provide increased support for the revolution in the South.

B. The Quynh Luu District Uprising

Throughout the months of October-December, according to various press accounts filtering out of North Viet-Nam, several disturbances occurred which called into question

¹⁷ The sources are respectively: Faber, Rot Leuchtet der Song Cai, op.cit., p.104 (N=185 in the early period of the land reform); Porter, "The Myth of the Bloodbath: North Vietnam's Land Reform Reconsidered", op.cit., p.11 (N=800 - 2,500); Buttinger, A Dragon Embattled, op.cit., Vol.2, p.914 (N=10,000 - 15,000); Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, op.cit., p.156 (N=50,000); and Hoang Van Chi, "Why No Peace in Vietnam?", in Sibnarayan Ray, editor, Vietnam Seen from East and West (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson Australia Ltd., 1966), p.36 (N=500,000).

the policies and popularity of the VWP and DRVN government.¹⁸ These incidents were localized events in reaction to specific abuses and grievances connected with the various facets of the land reform campaign. They were not set in motion by a VWP instigated de-Stalinization campaign and therefore should not be compared with the mid-1956 Polish workers' riots and the November Hungarian "revolution".¹⁹

The most dramatic incident was the so-called Quynh Luu uprising which occurred in the district of the same name in the Central Viet-Nam province of Nghe An during the first three weeks of November. Various accounts agree that the major issue was religious discrimination against the local Catholic community exacerbated by the land reform campaign which further disadvantaged this group.²⁰ The VWP leadership recognized this problem and was in the process of drawing up reforms when tensions reached an explosive state.

¹⁸ Buttinger, A Dragon Embattled, op.cit., Vol.2, pp.915-916; Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, op.cit., pp.156-157; Gittinger, "Communist Land Policy in North Vietnam", pp.119-120; Hoang Van Chi, From Colonialism to Communism, op.cit., p.232; and Journal d'Extreme-Orient (November 26, 1956), pp.1 and 5 which cites both "private well-informed sources" and a dispatch by Vietnam Press from Hong Kong. The possibility of a revolt had been suggested earlier at a PAVN conference; see: Fall, "A'Straight Zigzag': The Road to Socialism in North Viet-Nam", op.cit., p.221.

¹⁹ Bernard B. Fall, "Crisis in North Vietnam", Far Eastern Survey (January 1957), Vol.XXVI, No.1, pp.12-15.

²⁰ Ibid., p.102; Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0400 GMT, November 16, 1956; and Turley, "Army, Party and Society in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam", op.cit., pp.117-118.

Apparently the Cau Giat region of Nghe An, which embraces Quynh Luu district, had witnessed several murders of agrarian reform cadres prior to November 1956.²¹ The prime motive for these killings appears to have been revenge against particularly abusive officials who had singled out local Catholics as "reactionaries and saboteurs". Local vendettas were carried out along religious lines: Catholics versus non-Catholics.

On November 2 and 3; according to Nhan Dan, "reactionary gangsters" implemented their plan to exploit errors in the land reform campaign, and in particular, to use Catholic grievances for their own ends.²² Their plan consisted of "sow(ing) disorder and resist(ing) the local administration ... (by) luring a number of compatriots in some villages to indulge in illegal activities".²³ In practice this meant recruiting neighbouring youths for paramilitary training, erecting defensive barricades around Quynh Yen village, and "openly slandering the government and compell(ing) the local people to supply them with rice, buffaloes and oxen".²⁴

On November 5 a delegation of district administrative cadres accompanied by soldiers, arrived at Quynh Yen

²¹ Vietnam Press dispatch from Quang Tri in Journal d'Extreme-Orient, November 19, 1956, p.5.

²² "Tin Them Ve Vu Bon Phan Dong Gay Lon Xon O May Xa Thuoc Huyen Quynh-Luu (Nghe-An)" [Further Information About Reactionary Groups Causing Disturbances in the Villages of Quynh Luu district (Nghe An province)] Nhan Dan, (November 18, 1956), No.988, p.3.

²³ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 0500 GMT, November 20, 1956.

²⁴ Ibid.

village "to explain to the compatriots the position and policy of the Government".²⁵ This mission was attacked and beaten; twenty-eight of its members were held captive and a small number of arms captured. The prisoners were presented with a previously drawn up statement which they were requested to sign, admitting religious discrimination and "assaulting the people". This they refused to do and were therefore not released.²⁶

On November 9 a group of villagers assembled at Cau Giat where they attempted to present petitions to Canadian representatives of the Vinh Fixed Team.²⁷ The petitions asked that certain Catholic families be permitted to regroup to the south. It was at this time that local militia members intervened with the intention of dispersing the crowd. A scuffle broke out and the soldiers were forced to withdraw. They returned later with reinforcements

²⁵ Ibid.; it is unclear whether the soldiers were drawn from the regional forces or were in fact a platoon from PAVN's 325 Infantry Division; Fall, "Crisis in North Vietnam", op.cit., p.12-15, states they were regional troops of the 325th Division in platoon strength; later, in The Two Viet-Nams, p.157, Fall states the entire 325th Division was sent to crush the rebels. Contemporary accounts mention regular troops belonging to the 304th Division; dispatch from Ben Hai in Journal d'Extreme Orient, November 20, 1956, p.5.

²⁶ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 0500 GMT, November 20, 1956 states that the rebels "tried to compel them [the soldiers and cadres] to sign a false report to exonerate themselves later; but, though beaten, our soldiers and cadres refused to sign this report"; Fall's version states the opposite: "they [the rebels] forced the troops and party cadres publicly to confess their crimes and sign a prepared statement to that effect"; "Crisis in North Vietnam", op.cit., p.14.

²⁷ The Quynh Luu Uprisings (Saigon: Viet-Nam Chapter of the Asian People's Anti-Communist League, 1957), p.16; and Seventh Interim Report of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam, August 1, 1956 to April 30, 1957 (London: H.M.S.O., December 1957), Cmnd.335. p.11.

thus precipitating another confrontation. Violence broke out and shots were fired. Immediately rumours of this incident swept Quynh Luu district increasing the tension everywhere. Between then and November 12 two more government delegations were dispatched to negotiate with the protestors and each failed. The third delegation, composed of high level party members and the representatives of the administrative authorities of Nghe An was seized and held captive thus setting the stage for an even more violent confrontation.

On November 13, a crowd of 3-4,000 persons, mainly Catholics from the villages of Quynh Yen, Quynh Thanh, Quynh Ba and Quynh Lam decided to march on the district seat, Quynh Luu. En route they were confronted by regular troops who instructed the marchers to disperse and to return home. According to the official version "their leaders refused to listen and rushed to the soldiers and beat them".²⁸ The crowd, it should be pointed out, was armed with farming tools and several weapons including several captured earlier .

This disturbance attracted the attention of neighbouring villagers who assembled on the scene. In the ensuing melee the regular soldiers attempted

²⁸ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 0500 GMT, November 20, 1956; eyewitness accounts to these events stated that as many as 12,000 persons were involved in the confrontation with PAVN troops but that only "a few were killed" due to the crowd control technique of the army regulars, see: United Press dispatch from Saigon in The Bangkok Post (November 29, 1956), p.4. This report is based on refugee accounts and a briefing by the United States Information Service in Tourane (Da-Nang); it tallies closely with the official version.

unsuccessfully to keep the two groups apart. When "the reactionary elements" continued to attack the soldiers were forced to fight back. As a result several persons were killed and many more wounded.

The end came the next day (November 14) when PAVN overcame all resistance and occupied Quynh Yen village, the headquarters of the rebels. Militia men and cadres held captive since November 5 were released. Troops arrested the leaders of the revolt and disbanded the youth para-military group which had been formed previously. Within a week calm had returned sufficiently so that the Cau Giat market was reopened (November 17) and the Canh Truong Cathedral was once again holding Sunday religious services.²⁹

On November 21 it was announced that "order and security (had) been restored".³⁰ A similar impression was given by Pham Van Bach, the Interior Minister, in an interview with Jenna Dumasova, a Czech correspondent, broadcast on December 9.³¹ According to Gittinger, "the situation was well enough in hand that regular army troops were withdrawn and local militia reassigned to the sensitive areas "by late February".³²

Other accounts, supposedly based on eyewitness reports, paint a more severe picture. For example, Hoang

²⁹ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 0500 GMT, November 21, 1956.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, December 9, 1956.

³² Gittinger, "Communist Land Policy in North Vietnam", op.cit., p.120.

Van Chi has written that "twenty thousand peasants armed with sticks and other crude weapons, had fought against a whole division of regular troops".³³ Bernard Fall states that PAVN's 325th division was deployed to crush the rebellion and that "close to 6,000 farmers were deported or executed".³⁴ Joseph Buttinger cites claims by unnamed Western observers that "about 1,000 peasants were killed or wounded between November 10 and 20, and several thousand arrested and deported".³⁵ Whatever the magnitude of this civil disturbance it appears that it was generated by local grievances and confined to the district of Quynh Luu alone and that it was relatively short-lived.

One facet of this uprising remains as yet fully unexplained: the extent to which outside forces (i.e. agents of the RVN) were involved and whether or not they were in contact with a clandestine organization which opposed the DRVN. According to official reports appearing in the DRVN press and broadcast over the radio a "reactionary clique" had begun their planning "long in advance" to incite discontent among the Catholic community.³⁶

³³ Hoang Van Chi, From Colonialism to Communism, op.cit., p.232.

³⁴ Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, op.cit., p.157; according to the account in The Quynh Luu Uprisings, op.cit., p.14, other military units were involved as well: 269 Artillery Battalion and the 176 Regiment of the 316th Division, the 101st Regiment and elements of the 321st Division.

³⁵ Buttinger, A Dragon Embattled, op.cit., Vol.2, p.915, footnote 144.

³⁶ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 0500 GMT, November 20, 1956.

Minister of the Interior Pham Van Bach in the above cited interview claimed that "the ring leaders arrested in Quynh Yen village, Quynh Luu district have been identified as agents who had previously forced people of the area to go to the south".³⁷

One refugee account, made by a woman who fled Nghe An, stated that "the revolt was the work of a secret organization which had been active for some time and had killed several cadres of the agrarian reform".³⁸ This same source described "revolutionary elements" (i.e. anti-DRVN here) in the army who made guerilla attacks against "the VC [read PAVN] forces". From what we know about previous clandestine operations conducted against the DRVN³⁹ it seems not unreasonable to conclude that "outside forces" may have participated in these events; they may even have instigated various confrontations. However it appears obvious that sufficient local grievances existed to account for the fact that an uprising occurred in the first place.

What about other disturbances? There appears to be no evidence to suggest that a coordinated uprising was attempted by "reactionary elements" elsewhere in North Viet-Nam. DRVN sources do admit that "(i)n a number of

³⁷ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, December 9, 1956.

³⁸ Vietnam Press dispatch from Quang Tri in Journal d'Extreme Orient, November 19, 1956, p.5.

³⁹ Cf. "Lansdale Team's Report on Covert Saigon Mission in '54 and '55", in Sheehan, compiler, The Pentagon Papers, op.cit., pp.53-66.

other regions there have been a number of elements who have committed sabotage and sowed [sic] confusion among the people".⁴⁰ Neither the location, scope, duration nor intensity of these incidents was described. Bernard Fall has written that between November 5-13 the Quynh Luu rebellion had spread "to neighbouring districts" but that PAVN units effectively sealed off the region.⁴¹ Hoang Van Chi states without citation that "there were reports from several areas (Bac Ninh, Nam Dinh for example) of peasant uprising but according to the official sources serious trouble was avoided by the tact of soldiers and cadres".⁴² From the context in which these accounts appeared, these "uprisings" occurred prior to November 1956. Gittinger also provides evidence of similar - but not equally violent or extensive - demonstrations in a number of other parts of North Viet-Nam. In a region south of Hanoi, for example, "local officials apparently openly supported the dissidents in their complaints against Government policy".⁴³ Elsewhere, according to an account published in Saigon, "local militia

⁴⁰ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0400 GMT, November 16, 1956.

⁴¹ Fall, "Crisis in North Vietnam", op.cit.

⁴² Chi, From Colonialism to Communism, op.cit., p.232; another source states, "It is certain that the well-publicised uprising north of Vinh on November 13th was not the only disturbance to the peace, though the other incidents were relatively minor riots by discontented southerners bereft of their hopes of returning to Cochin-China [sic] as party or government leaders", "The Ho Chi Minh Way", The Economist (January 5, 1957), Vol.CLXXXII, No.5915, p.41.

⁴³ Gittinger, "Communist Land Policy in North Vietnam", op.cit., p.119.

troops apparently deserted to the cause of the demonstrators, forcing the regime to bring in the better disciplined regular army units".⁴⁴

Finally, there was a report of disturbances amongst the Tho and Nung ethnic minority peoples in the provinces of Cao Bang, Bac Kan, Lang Son, Thai Nguyen and Tuyen Quang resulting from the alleged execution of members of the family of Vi Van Dinh, a Tho chieftan.⁴⁵ They had apparently been sentenced to death by a court in Lang Son province. In the absence of other corroborating evidence it is impossible to confirm the alleged details of this event. We do know however, of the concern expressed by DRVN officials over the mistakes committed against sections of the ethnic minorities during the land reform campaign.

C. The Nhan Van - Giai Pham Affair

Throughout 1955-56 certain members of the DRVN's intellectual community comprising artists, journalists, lecturers, poets, musicians, lawyers, students and writers began to express their concern about the lack of freedom of expression in their respective fields of interest. This concern was deepened as a result of the numerous errors committed in the course of agrarian reform movement, and gradually the criticism itself broadened to include

⁴⁴ Land Reform Failures in Communist North Viet Nam (Saigon: Review Horizons, 1957), p.10.

⁴⁵ Associated Press, "Ethnic Minorities Rise Against Viet Minh", The Times of Viet Nam Weekly, Vol.I, No.46 (December 1956), p.4.

a much wider range of issues. This concern was intensified as a result of external factors: Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin (February), the Polish workers' uprising (June) and the Hundred Flowers Campaign in China (May). During the final quarter of 1956 this intellectual discontent found expression in a number of publications which printed material highly critical of PAVN, VWP and DRVN government officials. Foreign technical advisers were also the subject of comment, mainly for their overbearing attitudes.⁴⁶

The seeds of discontent had began to sprout prior to the CPSU's Twentieth Congress and the start of China's Hundred Flowers Movement. They grew to maturity and blossomed simultaneously with the recognition that serious errors had been committed in the movement for agrarian reform. They were in flower at the same time as the peasants' uprising in Nghe An province; as a result the so-called "revolt of the intellectuals" took on an added significance in the eyes of the VWP leadership.

⁴⁶ Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, op.cit., p.189 writes that Russian experts were accused of being "overbearing" and criticized for "driving around in big cars". The entire period of the Vietnamese "Hundred Flowers Movement" deserves closer study. No doubt in future some scholar with access to the Vietnamese-language original publications as well as other materials will alter our prevailing view of this important but little known episode. Our present understanding is based on the following sources: Tram Hoa Dua No Tren Dat Bac [The Blooming of the Hundred Flowers in North Vietnam] (Saigon: Mat Tran Bao Ve Tu Do Van Hoa, 1959), the book consists of two parts. Part I presents a history of the intellectual movement. Part II presents brief biographies of some 15 writers and excerpts from their writings; Hoa Mai, editor, The "Nhan Van" Affair (Saigon: Asian People's Anti-Communist League, 1958); Chi, From Colonialism to Communism, op.cit., pp.233-243; Nhu Phong, "Intellectuals, Writers and Artists", in Honey, editor,

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During the Resistance War many members of Viet-Nam's intelligentsia threw in their lot with anti-French forces, applying their talents to the anti-colonial struggle. Many left their safe-havens in France to engage in the "national salvation" effort. At the war's end they elected to remain in the North and practise their professions. At this time two areas of contention developed: (1) the distinction drawn between Party-approved (and therefore supported) intellectuals and those without sponsorship and (2) the tension between "creative freedom" and the attempt to direct artistic expression from above.⁴⁷ As for the first area of contention, it seems that many intellectuals were both disappointed and frustrated by the lack of concern shown for their welfare by the authorities. Others experienced a decline in their social and material standards from what they had known in either France or pre-war Viet-Nam. Regarding the second area, it seems that with the end of the war the cohesion built up began to erode slowly. As artists and writers began to explore other themes and topics besides those being officially stressed (anti-French struggle, national reconstruction, national reunification etc.) they encountered difficulties. Poet Hoang Cam, for example, led the struggle to unfetter artists and writers from continued

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North Vietnam Today, op.cit., pp.70-92; P.J. Honey, "The Revolt of the Intellectuals in North Vietnam", The World Today, Vol.XIII, No.6 (June 1957), pp.250-260; and Elizabeth Godfrey, "The Emergence of a Communist State in Vietnam", M.A. Thesis, Cornell University, 1962, pp.72-89.

⁴⁷ Chi, From Colonialism to Communism, op.cit., pp.233-237.

control by the military, from his post as a member of PAVN's Arts and Letters Bureau.⁴⁸

In 1955 Cam, in cooperation with Tran Dan and Tu Phac succeeded in obtaining the signatures of nearly 30 other artists and writers on a petition to the Party's Central Committee.⁴⁹ The petition called for the abolishment of Party control of arts and letters in the army. They submitted an "Outline Policy for Arts and Letters" with this petition which set forth three proposals:⁵⁰

1. Hand over the leadership of arts and letters to the artists and writers.
2. Establish an arts and letters association within the structure of the army organization.
3. Abolish the existing military regime insofar as it affects the artists and writers serving in the armed forces.

In April 1956 further tension was revealed in the awarding of prizes for the 1954-55 literary competitions.⁵¹ A group of intellectuals were unsuccessful in their attempt to change the selections by which prizes were awarded to those writers who hewed the Party line.

⁴⁸ Nhu Phong, "Intellectuals, Writers and Artists", op.cit., p.80.

⁴⁹ Van Nghe, No.11 (April 1958), p.106 cited in ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Hoa Mai, ed., The "Nhan Van" Affair, op.cit., pp.38-41.

During the months of July and August, Party-supported officials such as To Huu, came under increased attack in the course of study sessions held in Hanoi.⁵² To Huu, it has been alleged, was forced to admit publicly that he was out of contact with the rank and file membership of the Artists' and Writers' association. A recapitulation conference of the board of this association met on August 21. There the leaders admitted to a whole host of errors. It was in these circumstances that Phan Khoi, a greatly respected writer, was given official permission to publish Nhan Van in an attempt to encourage wider discussion.

By this time, however, the full force of errors committed in the land reform campaign were well known. Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin had already been publicly admitted and the Polish workers' uprising (of June 28, 1956) was general knowledge. Hanoi's intellectuals took up these issues, shifting from their earlier criticism of "bureaucratic stifling of freedom in the arts and letters" to criticism of the lack of civil rights, the lack of democratic freedom, as well as the "high-handed and dictatorial behavior of senior (Party and government) officials". They also argued for a new constitution and civil code.

According to the available evidence, this dissent coalesced in early 1956 around the Minh Duc publishing house which produced various critical tracts and pamphlets

⁵² Ibid., p.70.

in addition to the influential journal Giai Pham.⁵³ The first issue was produced in March and carried the writings of Hoang Cam, Van Cao, Le Dat, Tran Dan, Sy Ngoc, Tu Phac, Phung Quan, Nguyen Sang and Tu Vu.⁵⁴ Allegedly one of the poems by Le Dat was a veiled criticism, if not against Ho Chi Minh himself, then against the Viet-Nam Workers' Party.⁵⁵ Soon after the journal was seized and Tran Dan, a contributor, arrested.

On August 29, it reappeared under the title Giai Pham Mua Thu. Unlike the earlier Giai Pham, this publication picked up support from a considerably wider group of intellectuals.⁵⁶ It published a second issue in October and a third in December (under the new title Giai Pham Mua Dong). It would appear that VWP officials were prepared for the moment to tolerate such unprecedented written criticism. A fortnight after the issue of Giai Pham Mua Thu appeared, permission was given to publish another periodical, Nhan Van, under the editorship of Phan Khoi. A further five issues were produced until in mid-December, it too was forced to cease production. Issue number six, apparently in the process of being printed, was seized before it could be distributed.

⁵³ Chi, From Colonialism to Communism, op.cit., p.236; Giai Pham (Literary Works) was first published in March 1956; it was followed by a journal of the same name (except for the addition of the season) which numbered its issues from August 1956: Giai Pham Mua Thu (Autumn Literary Works) No.1 (August 1956); Giai Pham Mua Thu No.2 (October 1956); and Giai Pham Mua Dong (Winter Literary Works), No.1 (December 1956).

⁵⁴ Tram Hoa Dua No Tren Dat Bac, op.cit., p.102.

⁵⁵ Chi, loc.cit., p.236-237.

⁵⁶ Nhu Phong, "Writers, Intellectuals and Artists", op.cit., p.82.

In addition to these major publications, outlets for satire and further criticism were found in various other publications such as Dat Moi, a student publication, Tram Hoa and Van the official publication of the Artists' and Writers' Union.⁵⁷ Thus during the time period from mid-September to mid-December, when new press laws were introduced, the VWP appears to have exercised tolerance in its dealings with dissident intellectuals. After mid-December this tolerance gave away to slow but calculated moves to circumscribe this brief Vietnamese "Hundred Flowers Movement" that is, at least six months before the Chinese called a halt to their experiment.⁵⁸ There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the press in Vietnam was seen by officials as "a tool of struggle for the people". According to this view⁵⁹ the press "must serve the interests of the country and the people, safeguard the people's democratic regime and support the government of the Vietnam [Democratic] Republic". In this respect the Party judged the dissident intellectuals as failures. According to Xuan Troung:

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp.83 and 85; Godfrey, "The Emergence of a Communist State", op.cit., p.87.

⁵⁸ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, December 15, 1956; the Chinese decision to end the "Hundred Flowers" campaign can be dated to May-June, 1957, see Hinton, Communist China in World Politics, op.cit., p.33.

⁵⁹ The quotation is taken from the DRVN government decree imposing restraints on the press; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, December 15, 1956; see also Associated Press dispatch from Hong Kong in The New York Times (December 16, 1956), p.2.

Nhan Van talked about the "national unification", but does it know the enemy radio station in Saigon has used its slanderous and distorting articles to attack our regime? A number of enemy papers in South Vietnam have used Nhan Van's articles to defame North Vietnam, split the people, and to create doubts among the people of South Vietnam.⁶⁰

Secondly, VWP leaders in light of events then unfolding in Hungary (and no doubt Nghe An province) must have feared the long term ramifications. Another Party-endorsed attack on the "Nhan Van-Giai Pham group" stated

they [the dissident intellectuals] took advantage of the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which condemned the worship of individuals and the mistake of Comrade Stalin. They took advantage of the disturbances in Poland and the counter-revolutionary agitation in Hungary. They took advantage of our Central Committee's uncovering of mistakes in the land reform ... attempting to strike directly at the regime and the leadership of the Party, on both the political and artistic fronts.⁶¹

II. CHOU EN-LAI'S VISIT (November 1956)

On November 16 in the midst of these events the DRVN Foreign Ministry issued the following communique,

⁶⁰ Xuan Truong, "Opposing Slander and Distortion", Nhan Dan (December 10, 1956) as broadcast by Vietnam News Agency in Vietnamese morse to South Vietnam, 0630 GMT, December 14, 1956.

⁶¹ Nam Moc, "A Few Observations on Our Literary Theory and Criticism during the Past Fifteen Years", Nghien Cuu Van Hoc (Literary Research) (October 1960) translated by U.S. Joint Publications Research Service, Selected Translations on North Vietnam (May 18, 1961), No.3, JPRS 8304.

at the invitation of the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam Mr Chou En-lai, Prime Minister [Premier] of the People's Republic of China will arrive on November 18, 1956 for a visit to Vietnam.⁶²

On the following day the New China News Agency announced that Chou En-lai's visit to Viet-Nam was also part of seven-nation swing through Asia which would also encompass Cambodia, India, Burma, Pakistan, Nepal and Afghanistan.⁶³ Viet-Nam was the only socialist country on the list. Because Chou En-lai's trip came immediately after the Hungarian and Quynh Luu uprisings (and during the start of the intellectuals' revolt) it has been suggested that the possibility of Chinese intervention was in the air. For example Brian Shaw, an Australian scholar, has written:

Chou En-lai made his first visit to the DRVN in November 1956 in the wake of admissions in Hanoi of "errors" in the land reform, the crushing of a limited armed revolt against the Hanoi Government, and the Soviet Army's intervention in Hungary. The Chinese Premier's pledge that China would always oppose "great nation chauvinism" must have had special meaning in Hanoi, for the Vietnamese evidently had misgivings that China might use the armed dissidence in the

⁶² Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, November 16, 1956. The first public hint of Chou's visit came five hours earlier when VNA broadcasting in English morse to Southeast Asia at 0508 GMT stated, "It has been learned that Chou En-lai ... will soon visit the Democratic Republic of Vietnam". This lead the FBIS monitors to comment editorially that the "timing of the forthcoming event [was expressed] in the vaguest terms". The implications seems to be that the Chinese Premier's trip was arranged on short notice, thus providing further slender evidence for those who have interpreted Chou's trip ominously. On the other hand, in the author's view, no special significance need be attributed to the timing and style of these announcements.

⁶³ New China News Agency in English morse to Europe, 0800 GMT, November 17, 1956.

DRVN as an excuse for direct intervention. This fear could hardly have been alleviated by knowledge that Peking had urged Moscow to use force to crush the Hungarian uprising only a few days before.⁶⁴

Elizabeth Godfrey, an American scholar, has also suggested that Chou En-lai's visit was timed to provide crucial backing for the recently ousted VWP Secretary-General, Truong Chinh.⁶⁵ According to this view the VWP leadership had split along pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese lines. The dismissal of Truong Chinh from his Party post was a blow to the Chinese faction, which he allegedly headed. Chou's timely arrival, according to this view, prevented a further weakening of Truong Chinh's party standing.

It will be argued here that Chou En-lai's visit to the DRVN was prompted by three considerations, none of which encompassed the possibility of Chinese intervention

⁶⁴ Brian Shaw, "China and North Vietnam: Two Revolutionary Paths (Part I)", Current Scene (November 7, 1971), Vol.IX, No.11, p.4. This article is taken from Shaw's PhD thesis which was unavailable to me at the time of writing. See also, Honey "Revolt of the Intellectuals in North Vietnam", op.cit., p.251.

⁶⁵ Godfrey, "The Emergence of a Communist State", op.cit., pp.69-72, and 85-86. According to Godfrey the VWP, as led by Ho Chi Minh, was under challenge by a "fanatical, harsh and doctrinaire group" led by Truong Chinh and which also included, among others, Le Van Luong (recently dropped from the Politburo for his errors in the land reform campaign) and Nguyen Son (an allegedly pro-Chinese general who either died or was murdered on October 22, 1956). Chou's visit was timed to bolster the sagging fortunes of this group. Godfrey claims that Son's death was "sudden" (p.69) whereas another source claims he was "secretly liquidated"; "Uncle Ho's Garden: New Spring Perennials To Be Set Out", The Times of Viet Nam Weekly (December 1, 1956), No.46, p.5. This issue deserves further investigation.

to keep any particular faction of the VWP leadership in power. Chou's arrival in Hanoi came immediately after the CCP's 2nd plenum (8th congress) had heard a political report by Liu Shao-chi on the situation in Eastern Europe. The main reason for Chou's trip was to explain China's newly formulated policy on the nature of interstate relations within the Socialist bloc. Undoubtedly Chou sought VWP understanding and approval. It would appear from the text of the joint communique issued after Chou's visit that the Chinese Premier had also come to discuss problems related to Viet-Nam's reunification under the terms of the Geneva Agreements as well as the nature of continued PRC aid and technical assistance to the DRVN.

There are several reasons for discounting the possibility of Chinese intervention in Viet-Nam in late 1956. Firstly, the Quynh Luu uprising as we have seen was a localized affair based on grievances arising from religious discrimination in the conduct of the land reform campaign. It was quickly suppressed, in fact before the arrival of the Chinese Premier. The formal announcement that "order and security had been restored" was made while Chou was still in Hanoi. In other words VWP leaders were in a position to demonstrate that their authority was in no way threatened by these or any other disturbances. As regards the Nhan Van-Giai Pham affair it seems unlikely that the Chinese would wish to council the suppression of these views at this time. It should be recalled that similar ferment, the Hundred Flowers Movement, was just beginning to blossom in their own country and that the

the decision to end it (the so-called rectification campaign of 1957) was still several months away.⁶⁶ Further, initial criticism of Nhan Van has already appeared in the Party controlled press on November 10 over a week before the Chinese delegation paid a visit.⁶⁷

Secondly, it would appear that China had adopted a much more "liberal" view on the nature of relations between socialist states than the Soviet Union. As events in Poland and Hungary unfolded over the course of 1956 it was clear that serious disagreement had arisen between Moscow and Peking. According to Donald Zagoria, China had been sympathetic towards Polish leaders from the start. At the 8th Congress of the CCP, held in September 1956, for example,

⁶⁶ Roderick MacFarquhar, The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vol. I, Contradictions Among the People (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), pp.177-183. According to MacFarquhar's reconstruction the Chinese leadership decided sometime during mid-November 1956 and mid-January 1957 to launch a rectification campaign. In mid-November 1956 Mao Tse-tung was on record as favouring such a course while in mid-January a Chinese periodical Chung-kuo Ch'ing nien (Chinese Youth) revealed that the CCP's Central Committee had decided to launch a rectification campaign "as from 1958". However no firm decisions were taken until February when Chou En-lai returned and reported on his overseas tour. It was not until early March that these decisions were publicly announced. MacFarquhar's detailed examination of the Chinese side of these affairs lends support to the contention being developed here that Chou did not come to Viet-Nam to counsel VWP leaders on their "Hundred Flowers" affair.

⁶⁷ Godfrey, "The Emergence of a Communist State", op.cit., p.84-5 argues that the suspension of Nhan Van (Humanities) and Chou En-lai's visit were not connected as the first disciplinary actions against Nhan Van were taken on November 10th. It seems that criticism of Nhan Van began as early as September 1956, see Nguyen Chuong, "Important Errors in Nhan Van and in Giai Pham Mua Thu", Nhan Dan, September 20, 1956, cited in Hoa Mai, The "Nhan Van" Affair, op.cit., pp.51-55.

Mao, in conversation with [Edward] Ochab, [first secretary of the Polish Party] "showed sympathy for the Polish liberal faction and for Gomulka". At one point, when Mao and Ochab were discussing Molotov's ouster as Soviet Foreign Minister, Mao is alleged to have said: "It seems that China and Poland have been keeping company for some time already without even knowing it. It is good company and we are glad of it". Mao's attitude encouraged Ochab to speak out about Poland's trouble with Moscow. Ochab, in the presence of Soviet delegate Anastas Mikoyan, allegedly described difficulties with the Russians over trade and domestic autonomy. Mikoyan at another point reacted strongly to Ochab's moderate appraisal of the Poznan riots. Ochab remarked that the Poles knew more about what was going on in Poland than the Russians, adding "our people will no longer tolerate taking orders from abroad". At this point Mikoyan exploded and Ochab silently shook hands with Mao and left the room. Mao turned and followed Ochab, ignoring Mikoyan. According to Miss Lewis, Mikoyan piqued at this incident "boarded a plane the same day and returned to Moscow although the Congress had not closed."⁶⁸

In October, the Polish Party held its 8th Plenum. A Soviet delegation, led by N.S. Khrushchev, attended in an attempt to "forestall the installation of a new 'Liberal' leadership committed to freeing Poland from Soviet control".⁶⁹ It failed and Gomulka was elected the Party's First Secretary on October 21. Two days later the Hungarian revolt began with massive student demonstrations in Budapest. In these circumstances China advised Moscow against armed intervention in Poland. The Chinese view

⁶⁸ Zagoria, The Sino-Soviet Conflict, op.cit., pp.55-56; Zagoria relies on reports by Flora Lewis who had access to unnamed Polish sources, see pg.409.

⁶⁹ MacFarquhar, The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, op.cit., p.170.

in this matter, according to Zagoria, was that Poland was "not attempting to secede from the Bloc but only [trying] to follow a distinctive path to socialism".⁷⁰

Although the Chinese eventually condoned and even encouraged Russian suppression of the Hungarian rebels, this decision came only after the Hungarians themselves declared their aims as including, inter alia, secession from the Warsaw Pact. It would appear that China had initially adopted a position sympathetic towards the Hungarian "liberals", although much less so than its support for Polish leaders. However when it became clear that the Hungarians were advocating secession the Chinese changed their policy and in the interests of bloc unity encouraged the Russian suppression which followed.

The nature of socialist bloc unity and relations between socialist states was under revision in other quarters besides Poland and Hungary. Palmiro Togliatti, the head of the Italian Communist Party, produced some of the most persuasive arguments in favour of "polycentrism".⁷¹ Yugoslav leaders, now back in Moscow's good graces

⁷⁰ Zagoria, The Sino-Soviet Conflict, op.cit., p.56; Zagoria's excellent book was written before the Sino-Soviet polemics became openly revealing. On the Chinese attitude see: "The Origins and Development of the Differences Between The Leadership of the CPSU and Ourselves, Comment on the Open Letter of the Central Committee of the CPSU", by the editorial departments of Renmin Ribao (People's Daily) and Hongqi (Red Flag) in The Polemic on the General Line of the International Communist Movement (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965), pp.67-69 especially. Radvanyi, Hungary and the Superpowers, op.cit., pp.13, and 21-29, provides an insider's view.

⁷¹ Giorgio Galli, "Italian Communism", in William E. Griffith, editor, Communism in Europe: Continuity, and Change, and the Sino-Soviet Dispute, Vol.1, (New York: Pergamon Press, 1964), pp.351-364.

(temporarily anyway) were also plugging for greater autonomy and independence in the relations between the people's democracies and Russia. Throughout 1956, in fact, the Soviets acquiesced to Yugoslav arguments, but made it clear only in the bilateral relations between Belgrade and Moscow. However, with the onset of violent rebellion in Hungary, the Soviets were forced to make a more generalized policy statement which they issued on October 30, 1956. According to an analysis by Klaus Mehnert:

in its search for a formula for its relationship to the Eastern European members of the 'camp', one which would satisfy these states and at the same time keep its own dominant position more or less intact, the Kremlin came up with the expression sodruzhestvo (literally: co-friendship, like sosuchestvovanie = co-existence), which might be translated as 'friendship association' (in the sense of 'commonwealth'). The expression 'sodruzhestvo of the socialist countries' had already made its appearance the year before, but it was not defined until the Declaration of October 30: complete equality of status, respect for territorial immunity, national independence and sovereignty, mutual non-interference in domestic affairs, and co-operation in the fields of economy, politics and culture.⁷²

Liu Shao-chi was in Moscow at the time this declaration was being drawn up, and he was privy to its content.⁷³ Two

⁷² Klaus Mehnert, Peking and Moscow (New York: Mentor Books, 1964), pp.371-372.

⁷³ MacFarquhar, The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, op.cit., pp.170-171; "At that time the leaders of the CPSU accepted our suggestion and on October 30, 1956 issued the Soviet Government's "Declaration on the Foundations of the Development and Further Strengthening of Friendship and Cooperation Between the Soviet Union and Other Socialist Countries", in which they examined some of their own past mistakes in handling their relations with fraternal countries. On November 1, the Chinese Government issued a statement expressing support for the Soviet Government's declaration", quoted in "The Origin and Development of the Differences Between Leadership of the CPSU and Ourselves", op.cit., pp.69-70.

days later on November 1 the Chinese released a major statement endorsing the Soviet declaration. The October 30 statement, it should be pointed out, was the first Russian concession to the principles of equality in the relations among all the Communist parties. The Chinese statement took the opportunity to support Gomulka, pointing out that one should not confuse "Gomulkaism" (an expression of the "just demands of the broadest mass of the people") and reaction (the conspiratorial activities of "an extremely small number of reactionary elements"). The PRC's November 1 statement ended with a warning against "big power chauvinism", which "inevitably results in serious damage to the solidarity and common cause of the socialist countries".⁷⁴

This, coupled with the violent Russian suppression of the Hungarian Rebellion, is the backdrop to Chou En-lai's visit to Asia. In his dealings with the DRVN officials Chou explained the Chinese position on the nature of relations between socialist states and he sought their support. Elsewhere on his tour, Chou tried to soften the impact of Russian intervention in Hungary .

Chou En-lai arrived in Hanoi on November 18. According to Elizabeth Godfrey, the manner of Chou's reception tends to confirm the rumours of a split between pro-Russian and pro-Chinese wings of the VWP.⁷⁵ Although Chou held talks with Ho, he was met at the airport by and accompanied throughout by Pham Van Dong. And,

⁷⁴ Zagoria, The Sino-Soviet Conflict, op.cit., p.57.

⁷⁵ Godfrey, "The Emergence of a Communist State", op.cit., p.86.

according to Godfrey, Ho remained noticeably off stage during Chou's tour.

The manner in which Chou En-lai was received, in accordance with Vietnamese protocol, provides no evidence of a split in the VWP. Chou En-lai was making a state visit in his capacity as Chinese Premier. He was met by his counter-part, the Vietnamese Premier, Pham Van Dong. It would have been quite extraordinary if Ho Chi Minh, the DRVN President, had gone to the airport to receive an official who was not also a head of state (Ho did not meet Mikoyan when he arrived in April, for example). At any rate, Chou En-lai met Ho Chi Minh on at least three occasions during his tour, (see Table 6-2). There was thus sufficient contact for high level discussion.

TABLE 6-2

CHOU EN-LAI'S SCHEDULE DURING HIS VISIT TO THE DRVN
(18-22 November 1956)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
18 November	Chou En-lai arrives in Hanoi; Welcoming speech at the airport (Premier Chou and Pham Van Dong); Chou received by Ho Chi Minh; Rally in Ba Dinh square (N=6,000); Reception at Presidential Place; Chou - Ho meet again.
19 November	Chou visits the China-Vietnam Friendship Association; Speeches by Chou - Dong; Chou - Dong confer; Evening reception; Chou attends cultural performance.
20 November	Chou visits Jade mountain pagoda, Hai Ba Trung temple, Union Match factory, Gia Lam railways works; Chou delivers talk at Hanoi University; PRC Embassy hosts reception; speeches by Chou - Dong.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
21 November	Ho Chi Minh hosts dinner for Chou.
22 November	PRC - DRVN joint communique. Chou departs for Phnom Penh.

The view that Chou En-lai's visit was timed to provide crucial support for Truong Chinh, the alleged leader of the pro-Chinese faction, may be similarly dismissed. It should be recalled that Truong Chinh (in 1950 a founding member of the Vietnam-Soviet Friendship Association) was held partly responsible for failures in the conduct of the land reform campaign because of his role as VWP Secretary-General. He was dismissed from his post. However Truong Chinh was not expelled from the Party Central Committee and in fact retained his place on the Politburo; other individuals more directly involved, received much more severe punishment.⁷⁶ According to press and radio accounts Chinh made two appearances during Chou's visit: (1) on November 18 at Pham Van Dong's official reception at the Presidential Palace and (2) on November 29 at the reception given by the Chinese Ambassador Lo Kuei-po. In both instances he was invited in his capacity as Politburo member. As both occasions were state

⁷⁶ Ho Viet Thang was expelled from the VWP Central Committee, Le Van Luong was dropped from the VWP Politburo and Secretariat whereas Truong Chinh, although forced to relinquish the post of Party Secretary-General kept his position in the Politburo and continued as assistant director of the Central Land Reform Committee.

rather than Party affairs it is not surprising to find that Truong Chinh (who held no state position) was listed according to protocol, after other individuals who held state positions but who were outranked by Chinh in Party standing. In short, the rank-order of names for state occasions is not an appropriate measure of Party standing (or lack thereof).

In the interval between his dismissal as Party Secretary-General and Chou En-lai's arrival Chinh made at least two public appearances as a representative of the Politburo. On November 2 he addressed a Congress of the National Salvation Youth League and on November 9 he addressed a gathering of Party officials on the Suez situation.⁷⁷ Thus it would appear that Truong Chinh was playing an active role in Party affairs in advance of Chou's arrival. He continued to do so after Chou's departure.

An analysis of the various speeches made by Pham Van Dong and Chou En-lai reveals that three areas dominated their discussions: (1) the nature of bloc unity (2) Viet-Nam's unification and (3) Chinese aid. The Chinese formula for bloc unity in the post-Stalin era was alluded to by Chou En-lai on November 19 in a speech made on the premises of the Vietnam-China Association. Here Chou stated that the "friendship and cooperation" between China and Viet-Nam had been successfully based on the Five Principles

⁷⁷ Cf. Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 1200 GMT, November 5, 1956 and Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, November 9, 1956.

of Peaceful Co-existence as well as on the basis of "socialism and internationalism".⁷⁸ A day later, in a speech given on the grounds of the Chinese Embassy, Chou expanded this formula for successful bi-lateral relations to embrace the entire Socialist bloc. According to the Chinese Premier, "China would maintain its friendly relations not only with Vietnam but all countries. The Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, which were adopted by India and China two years ago, have become standard rules of co-existence for all countries, including the Vietnam Democratic Republic. Socialist Countries too, should observe the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence in their relations".⁷⁹

In this same speech Chou En-lai pledged that "China would determinedly and thoroughly eradicate great-nation chauvinism, just as Chairman Mao Tse-tung has said". Was this remark on "great-nation chauvinism" a signal to the Vietnamese, as suggested by Brian Shaw, that China was not about to intervene to end armed dissidence within the DRVN? Were the Vietnamese in fact so fearful of Chinese intervention that they needed public reassurance? Shaw has in fact suggested that Chou En-lai was deliberately taken to the shrine of the Trung sisters as a subtle

⁷⁸ Vietnam News Agency in English to Southeast Asia, 1140 GMT, November 19, 1956.

⁷⁹ Vietnam News Agency in English to Southeast Asia, 0556 GMT, November 21, 1956. Emphasis added.

warning that the Vietnamese would resist present day Chinese invaders as their ancestors had done in 43 A.D.⁸⁰

The phrase "great-nation chauvinism" which Chou quoted Mao as using most likely refers to its appearance in Mao's address to the 8th National Congress of the CCP (September 15, 1956). It appeared in the section on international affairs (but interestingly not in the international section of Liu Shao-chi's important political report). According to Mao:

We must be good at learning from our forerunner, the Soviet Union, (applause) from the People's Democracies, (applause) from the fraternal parties in other parts of the world (applause) as well as from the people the world over (applause). We must never adopt a conceited attitude of great-nation chauvinism and become arrogant and complacent because of the victory of the revolution and some success in the construction of the country. Every nation, big or small, has its own strong and weak points. Even if we had achieved extremely great success, there is no reason whatsoever to feel conceited and complacent. Humility helps one to make progress whereas conceit makes one lag behind. This is a truth we must always bear in mind.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Shaw, "China and North Vietnam", op.cit., p.4 writes, "Chou also visited the shrine of the Trung sisters (leaders of an unsuccessful revolt against Chinese rule in 39-41 A.D.) and laid flowers in memory of their sacrifice to stress that 'new China' would not repeat the errors of former Chinese rulers". For a recent appreciation of the role of the Trung sisters in Viet-Nam's history see Uy Ban Khoa Hoc Xa Hoi Viet-Nam [Social Science Committee of Vietnam], Lich Su Viet Nam [History of Vietnam], Vol.I (Hanoi: Nha Xuat Ban Khoa Hoc Xa Hoi, 1971), pp.80-86.

⁸¹ Mao Tse-tung, "Opening Address at the 8th National Congress of the Communist Party of China", in Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Vol.I Documents, op.cit., p.10.

In April 1956 in a statement by Mao entitled "On the Ten Great Relationships" he referred to chauvinism in relation to Han Chinese-ethnic minority interaction.⁸² This term refers to relations within China. The term "great-nation chauvinism" refers to external relations; that is between Russia and Poland. There is some evidence that chauvinism on the part of foreign technical advisers was an issue in Viet-Nam.⁸³ If so this would refer to Russian, Eastern European and Chinese advisers and their relations with native Vietnamese. In any case the issue of chauvinism on the part of foreign advisers was not a major one in terms of the DRVN's agrarian reform and it is most unlikely that it would have played such a prominent role in Chou's remarks. Although Western and DRVN inspired propaganda tried to play on the alleged traditional enmity between China and Viet-Nam when discussing the Chinese assistance to the DRVN, it seems from the slight evidence available that the behaviour of Soviet (and

⁸² Mao Tse-tung, "On the Ten Great Relationships", in Stuart Schram, editor, Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed: Talks and Letters: 1956-1971 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974), pp.81-83.

⁸³ Although the information is scanty it would appear that there were about 400 foreign advisers in Viet-Nam in 1954, the majority comprising Chinese (perhaps 300). This number rose to 3,500 by 1962, according to A.L. Nutt; William Kaye asserts that it only reached 1,500 by that time. Albert Parry has written that about 2,300 foreign technicians served in Viet-Nam during the decade 1954-64. Undoubtedly there is a problem of classification here as none of the writers defines what he/she means by "adviser" or "technician". Cf.: Kaye, "A Bowl of Rice Divided", op.cit., p.112; Nutt, Troika on Trial, op.cit., Vol.1, pp.217 and 218; Albert Parry, "Soviet Aid to Vietnam", The Reporter (January 12, 1967), p.32; and Turner, Vietnamese Communism, op.cit., p.292, writes of "thousands" of advisers.

not Chinese) advisers was the major problem.⁸⁴ In this case Chou En-lai's reference to "great-nation chauvinism" (i.e. Russian-Polish relations), coupled with China's support for the Gomulka regime, must have fallen on sympathetic Vietnamese ears that is to the extent that Russian (and not Chinese) advisers were guilty of chauvinistic behaviour while on assignment to the DRVN. To the extent that Chinese advisers may have been guilty of chauvinism, Chou's remark may be seen as being sympathetic to the view of the Vietnamese leadership. The term "great-nation chauvinism" was repeated in the PRC's November 1 endorsement of the Russian Declaration of October 30. Clearly the issue was not Chinese intervention in Viet-Nam but a Chinese attempt to explain and receive support for their defence of the Polish regime against the Soviet Union. As one observer has pointed out, the Chinese chose the tactic of chiding themselves against "great-nation

⁸⁴ Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, op.cit., p.189. The evidence is scanty nonetheless; according to Professor Huynh Kim Khanh, a Vietnamese student of the history of the VWP, Chou En-lai's visit was occasioned at least in part by difficulties in the relations between Chinese specialists serving in the DRVN and their Vietnamese hosts. Professor Khanh bases his remarks on confidential conversations he has had in recent years with high-level DRVN officials passing through Singapore. At any rate this sensitive issue has been kept from the Party-controlled press. Interview with Professor Huynh Kim Khanh in Singapore, January 15, 1976. Cf. Jumper and Normand, "Vietnam", op.cit., p.508.

chauvinism" as an indirect means of criticizing the Soviets.⁸⁵ The wording of the final joint communique did not explicitly commit the DRVN to the Chinese view point:

The two prime ministers [sic] pledged that in the relations between their two countries as well as in relations between them and other countries, the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence would be strictly observed and mistakes due to chauvinism resolutely prevented.⁸⁶

In brief the words "great nation" (an unmistakable reference to Russia) were dropped. This changed wording must have been more acceptable to the Vietnamese who had no compelling reason to openly support the Chinese criticism of Russia. To the extent that Chinese specialists (and/or Russian and Eastern Europeans) then serving in Viet-Nam had exhibited "chauvinistic attitudes" towards their Vietnamese counterparts, the wording of the joint communique gave the DRVN the best of both positions.

On November 21, the People's Daily, in another important comment on the Soviet October 30 declaration, raised the issue of "great-nation chauvinism" and "narrow nationalism". According to the editorial, "If in future relations between socialist countries the larger nations

⁸⁵ Mehnert, Peking and Moscow, op.cit., p.372; "But the leadership of the CPSU made grave errors in both [Hungary and Poland]. By moving up troops in an attempt to subdue the Polish comrades by armed force it committed the error of great-power chauvinism", (emphasis added), quoted from "The Origin and Development of the Differences Between the Leadership of the CPSU and Ourselves", op.cit., p.69.

⁸⁶ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0600 GMT, November 22, 1956.

could make a greater effort to avoid 'big power chauvinism' (that is the main thing) and the smaller nations could make greater effort to avoid nationalism (that is also important), then there is no doubt that friendship and solidarity based on equality would be strengthened and continue to grow..."⁸⁷

Once again the Vietnamese staked out the middle ground on this question. In an editorial appearing in Nhan Dan on November 29th, in obvious reference to the previous Chinese pronouncement, the VWP accepted the view that chauvinism and narrow nationalism were both problems. They once again dropped the words "great nation" and neglected to comment on which of the two (chauvinism or narrow nationalism) was more important. In fact the Vietnamese stated that chauvinism could be a product of either.⁸⁸

Undoubtedly of greater importance to the Vietnamese was the second item on the agenda: Chinese views on the reunification of Viet-Nam. This issue was raised repeatedly during Chou En-lai's stay. The fact at least two members of the Chinese delegation (Chou En-lai, Ch'iao Kuan-hua and possibly Lo Kuei-po)⁸⁹ had attended

⁸⁷ Cited in Mehnert, Peking and Moscow, op.cit., p.372.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Vietnam News Agency in English Morse to Southeast Asia, 1144 GMT, November 29, 1956.

⁸⁹ Donald W. Klein and Anne B. Clark, Biographic Dictionary of Chinese Communism 1921-1965 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), Vol.I, pp.179-182, and 216 and Vol.II, pp.648-650; however, as the Chinese delegation at the 1954 Geneva Conference "numbered close to two hundred" it may not be significant that at least some member of the delegation to Hanoi had served in Geneva, see: Chester L. Cooper, The Lost Crusade: America in Vietnam (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1970), p.77.

the 1954 Geneva Conference may be evidence that they expected to discuss this issue.

On November 19 at the Presidential reception for Chou En-lai, Premier Pham Van Dong broached the subject. After pointing out that the unification of Viet-Nam had met many difficulties and that the Geneva Agreements were being seriously threatened by U.S. military intervention (weapons and personnel), he stated his belief that with the support of "China, the Soviet Union and the world peace forces, the Vietnamese people ... will certainly be victorious in the struggle for the just cause of realizing national unity in accordance with the Geneva Accords".⁹⁰

By way of reply Chou outlined his country's policy views on this matter. According to the Chinese Premier, "this disregard of international obligations [which meant a "delay", in his words, in the holding of general elections] and the wrecking of the Geneva Agreements will impel the nations participating in the Geneva Conference to take up their inescapable responsibility and adopt effective, joint measures for the complete implementation of the Agreements".⁹¹

The question of who or what would "impel " the Geneva Conference participants to make joint action was left unstated. Did the Vietnamese want China to undertake new initiatives? A partial answer may be found by referring

⁹⁰ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0440 GMT, November 19, 1956.

⁹¹ Ibid.

once again to the joint DRVN-PRC communique, and more importantly to the differing interpretations given by the Hanoi and Peking press.

The joint communique made three points with respect to the 1954 Geneva Agreements: (1) that their application in Cambodia and Laos "have brought good results", (2) that the ICC had "contributed towards restoring peace in Vietnam" and therefore should be permitted to carry on its work and (3) that the implementation of the Agreements was "being gravely sabotaged" in Viet-Nam.⁹² The only solution suggested was "that the countries participating in the 1954 Geneva Conference had the irrefutable responsibility to stop the development of such a situation, and that they should take effective joint measures to ensure full implementation of the Geneva Agreements". Harold Hinton has suggested that this statement was aimed primarily at the Soviet Union but that there was also some hope that Britain "which was then on extremely bad terms with the United States on account of the Suez crisis, might be persuaded to reverse its earlier stand on the elections in Vietnam".⁹³

The differing views on the extent of Chinese support, although papered over in the joint communique, were made quite clear in the divergent editorial comment on the communique. Nhan Dan raised the question of reconvening

⁹² Vietnam News Agency in English Morse to Southeast Asia, 0600 GMT, November 22, 1956.

⁹³ Hinton, Communist China in World Politics, op.cit., pp.338-339.

the Geneva Conference "as proposed by Premier Chou En-lai on January 30, 1956".⁹⁴ As we have seen the Chinese since then had adopted a "wait and see attitude". Nhan Dan then went on to warn of "serious results for peace and security" in Indochina and Southeast Asia if the Geneva Conference participants "remain indifferent" to the present situation (i.e. continued U.S. sabotage and postponement of elections). Finally, Nhan Dan explicitly stated what "effective measures" it expected conference participants to take: that the two co-chairmen, in accordance with the Soviet Union's proposal of 21 July 1956, "will again recommend that South Vietnam communicate their views about the time requested for opening consultations on [the] organization of nationwide elections as a means of achieving the reunification of Vietnam".

The Chinese obviously did not agree to renew their call for a new Geneva Conference, and neither did they give verbal support to North Viet-Nam's "warning". According to the editorial in the People's Daily

As a party to the Geneva Conference and a neighbour of Indochina, China is very interested in the consolidation of peace in Indochina and the carrying out of the Geneva Agreements.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Editorial in Nhan Dan, November 24, 1956 as broadcast by the Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0510 GMT, November 24, 1956.

⁹⁵ Editorial in the People's Daily, November 23, 1956 as broadcast by the New China News Agency in English morse to North America, 0114 GMT, November 23, 1956.

On this basis China was willing to join the DRVN in urging the Geneva Conference participants "to take effective joint measures" to implement the Agreements but nothing more.

The third and perhaps least controversial item on the PRC-DRVN agenda was the nature of Chinese assistance to Viet-Nam. Although no formal trade or other agreement was announced at this time it seems certain from remarks made during Chou's tour that some discussions had occurred and perhaps even an agreement had been reached. On November 18th Chou En-lai pledged that "the Chinese people will as heretofore, firmly support the national construction of the Vietnamese people".⁹⁶ The final communique repeated this formulation after reference to the expanding nature of "economic and cultural exchanges and contacts" and the fact that Pham Van Dong has "clearly pointed out the importance of China's technical aid to Vietnam". The Chinese delegation did not include any economic or technical aid specialists and it is doubtful that anything more than general agreement was reached on the nature of future Chinese assistance.

Interestingly among the members of the Chinese delegation was Ho Lung. Ho (one of 10 PLA Marshals), a vice chairman of the National Defense Council, had been re-elected to the CCP's Central Committee at the 8th Congress in September and to the Politburo (for the first

⁹⁶ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0440 GMT, November 19, 1956.

time) at the 1st plenum (8th Congress) that same month. This trip marked his first venture into the realm of international diplomacy.⁹⁷ His presence suggests that military affairs (including aid or other assistance) may well have been discussed.

In summary, Chou En-lai's visit to Hanoi was intended to enable the Chinese leaders to appraise the Vietnamese leaders of how, in the Chinese view, developments in Eastern Europe would effect socialist bloc unity. No doubt Chou sought Ho Chi Minh's own opinions. Chou's visit also served as a convenient forum for consultations on matters of mutual interest (Vietnamese unification and aid). The "threat" of a Chinese invasion was in fact non-existent.

III. ON THE REVOLUTION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

A. The 11th Plenum: Introduction

In December 1956 the VWP Central Committee held its 11th Plenum. Two major sets of problems confronted Party leaders: how to consolidate economic progress in the North in the aftermath of disruptions caused by widespread errors in the conduct of the land reform campaign and, secondly, what kind of strategy should be devised for the South in light of the fact that reunification under the terms of the Geneva Agreement now seemed unlikely.

⁹⁷ Klein and Clark, Biographic Dictionary, op.cit., Vol.I, pp.297-303.

It was at this Plenum that the Party also reviewed decisions taken three months earlier, at the 10th Plenum, regarding consolidation of the North. Such a review was obviously imperative as a result of the Quynh Luu uprising.⁹⁸ With regard to the South, the Party faced equally important decisions as it was presented with a major policy review undertaken by senior officials in Nam Bo.

The 11th Plenum was followed later in the month by the convening of the 6th Session of the DRVN's National Assembly. This session lasted for nearly a month, from December 29, 1956 to January 25, 1957. This in itself was an unprecedented event. For example, throughout the entire period 1946-1971, during which 26 sessions of the National Assembly were held, the 6th Session stands out as the only session to last for more than fifteen days. In fact, over this time period the average session was just under eight days.⁹⁹ Howard Penniman has rightly observed that "(t)he sessions themselves are much too brief to allow the National Assembly to play a serious role as policy-making body or even as a critic of policies made elsewhere".¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ A comparison of decisions taken by the 10th Plenum and "recently" (i.e. at the 11th Plenum) may be found in: "Tang Cuong Doan Ket, Nang Cao Tinh To Chuc Va Boi Duong Chi Khi Chien Dau Trong Toan Dang" [Reinforce Unity, Raise the Quality of Orgnaization and Foster the Will to Struggle in the Party] Hoc Tap (November-December, 1956), No.11 reprinted in Nhan Dan (December 30, 1956), No.1030, p.2.

⁹⁹ Howard R. Penniman, Elections in South Vietnam (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972), pp.217-218.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.217.

What explains the extraordinary duration of the National Assembly's 6th Session? According to the official press reports, it would seem many areas of policy were extensively discussed, reported on, and eventually approved.¹⁰¹ While the 6th Session continued to play its rubber stamp role, it also seems likely that the gravity of the issues which faced VWP decision-makers required a full and lengthy review by officials outside the circle of the Central Committee. The National Assembly provided a convenient forum for this review.

It would also seem a reasonable assumption that speeches and reports delivered before the National Assembly by senior Party officials acting in their legislative capacities (Pham Van Dong and Pham Hung, for example) were an indication of decisions taken by the Party at its 11th Plenum, which met in advance of the opening of the 6th legislative session.

At the 11th Plenum the Central Committee grappled with the complex problem of how to integrate policies for the North and South into one comprehensive revolutionary strategy. According to Pham Hung:

¹⁰¹ The issue of reunification received extensive coverage; in addition to the reports by Pham Van Dong and Pham Hung, the following delivered reports which touched upon the issue: Ton Quang Phiet who delivered the report of the Standing Committee; Huynh Van Tieng who delivered the report for the subcommission on reunification; Xuan Thuy who also spoke as a member of the subcommission on reunification and the National Assembly itself which passed a resolution on reunification on January 18th and which also addressed a letter "to the people of the South".

The revolutionary task which arises from the fact that our country is partitioned into two zones, demands that all policies and activities in the North be implemented with the central objective of winning over the South.... Acting in conformity with this line is advantageous to the realization of unification as well as to the consolidation of the North. Acting counter to this, either neglecting the consolidation of the North for the sake of winning over the South, or concentrating on the consolidation of the North without paying due attention to winning over the South, would bring about negative results for the revolutionary movement. The consolidation of the North and the winning over of the South are not contradictory - indeed, they cannot be separated from each other.¹⁰²

The Party's theoretical journal Hoc Tap (Studies), which discussed the decisions taken by the December plenum, made it clear that given these two tasks, priority was to be given to consolidation of the North:

The consolidation of the North is the key task in realizing national unification. Therefore we must not allow the winning over of the South to detract from the requirements of consolidating the North.¹⁰³ (emphasis added).

One other concern seems to have vexed VWP decision-makers: were the policies then being drawn up for the North and the South in fact "revolutionary policies"? Hoc Tap was led to state:

¹⁰² Pham Hung, "Dau Tranh Cho Thong Nhat Nuoc Nha" [The Struggle for National Unification], Nhan Dan (January 6, 1957), No.1037, p.2; Hung's speech was delivered on January 3rd.

¹⁰³ "Tang Cuong Doan Ket, Nang Cao Tinh To Chuc Va Boi Duong Chi Khi Chien Dau Trong Toan Dang", op.cit.

Speaking from the viewpoint of the entire nation, it is due to the scheming of the American imperialists and their henchmen that our country is still divided into two zones. The struggle for national reunification is clearly a revolutionary struggle, although long and difficult.¹⁰⁴

The very fact that VWP leaders, Pham Hung in particular,¹⁰⁵ had to argue that their policies were "revolutionary" is an indication of the nature of the problems that they faced. In the North, on the one hand, the completion of the anti-feudal task as a result of the land reform campaign did not lead to collectivization but rather to rectification and consolidation. In the South, on the other hand, reliance on the Geneva Agreements and the policy of peaceful struggle, had clearly failed to achieve reunification. Cadres there were rebuffed in their attempts to get permission to resume armed struggle. Indeed, Party officials in Nam Bo were called upon to exercise "close control" over certain cadres who violated Party policy by employing violence.¹⁰⁶ These

104 Ibid.

105 Hung, a member of the VWP Politburo and a minister attached to the Premier's office (possibly with responsibilities for southern affairs) served as a deputy to Le Duan on the Nam Bo Regional Committee during the Resistance. He has been mentioned by one source as a possible co-author with Le Duan of "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam"; see: Nhu Phong, "List of Public Figures Presently Making Up the Top Leadership in North Vietnam", op.cit., p.13.

106 According to one account "(t)he situation was increasingly difficult. Most Party members had no confidence in political struggle and in the Party's policies. They wanted to activate armed forces and these forces had to be expanded. In some areas Party members automatically killed enemy spies and furnished the people with weapons to counter the enemy's terrorism. However there were only a few incidents due to the close control of the higher echelons", Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.25.

restrictions led certain cadres to question whether they were to be engaged in "revolution" or "reformism".¹⁰⁷ In addition, other cadres chose to question the efficacy of Khrushchev's policy of so-called "peaceful transition to socialism" as a result of the Anglo-French seizure of the Suez Canal. Again, according to Hoc Tap:

The Anglo-French attack on Egypt posed the question: are the forces of peace really growing daily? Is the capacity of these forces to prevent violent conflict increasing or decreasing?¹⁰⁸

Because of these doubts one of the objectives of the 11th Plenum was to redefine the theoretical nature of northern and southern strategies within a comprehensive revolutionary framework. This difficult task was left to Pham Hung to argue in public. He reasoned that the national democratic revolution was still a nation-wide struggle despite the fact that the North had been liberated. The objective of this struggle was to free the entire country from both imperialism and feudalism. In Hung's words:

Although the present situation is more complicated than before, and although the manner of struggle is different than before, the basic nature of the question of national unification is still a matter of implementing revolutionary tasks, still a matter of continuing and completing the people's national democratic revolution throughout the entire country. Because our country is temporarily partitioned into two zones the work of completing the people's national democratic revolution is being carried out under the slogan of 'National Unification'.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ The issue was discussed in Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam, op.cit., p.7.

¹⁰⁸ "Tang Cuong Doan Ket, Nang Cao Tinh To Chuc Va Boi Duong Chi Khi Chien Dau Trong Toan Dang", op.cit.

¹⁰⁹ Pham Hung, "Dau Tranh Cho Thong Nhat Nuoc Nha", op.cit.

In other words, after a close review of Party policies for all of Viet-Nam, the VWP leadership attempted to overcome the growing ideological malaise within its ranks by stating in forthright and unequivocal terms its renewed commitment to Vietnamese independence by revolutionary means. National independence, however, could not be achieved immediately and cadres were enjoined to recall Ho Chi Minh's remarks made on July 22, 1954 immediately after the Geneva Conference that the struggle for independence was a long and arduous affair.¹¹⁰

The new revolutionary strategy which emerged from the VWP's 11th Plenum had three main components:

1. consolidation of the North as the base for unification.
2. maintenance and development of the struggle movement in the South.
3. winning the sympathy and support of the world's peoples.

Extensive public discussion was given to points one and three. Point two, concerning the South, was dealt with in a major statement which remained confidential. It was transmitted to the Nam Bo Regional Committee for

¹¹⁰ Ho Chi Minh, "Appeal Made After the Successful Conclusion of the Geneva Agreements (July 22, 1954)", in Bernard B. Fall, editor, Ho Chi Minh On Revolution (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), p.271; these remarks were cited by Pham Hung and Pham Van Dong in their reports to the National Assembly.

discussion and implementation, a task which appears to have been accomplished prior to March 1957.¹¹¹ From that moment on it served as the basis for Party policy in the South until late 1958.

B. The 11th Plenum: Consolidating the North

The "key nature" of consolidating the North was made evident at this time in numerous statements attributed to Party and Government leaders. According to Hoc Tap the VWP's present policy priorities were: "consolidation of the North, leading it toward socialism step by step while at the same time struggling to achieve national unification on the basis of independence and democracy by peaceful means."¹¹² Pham Hung, speaking before the National Assembly's 6th Session, chose to underscore these priorities in this way:

The task of consolidating the North is a basic one. The government's report delivered to the National Assembly's Fifth session [in Sept. 1955] clearly pointed this out: "In order to consolidate peace and to realize national unification we must be strong. This strength is based on the unity and the struggle

¹¹¹ In March 1957 RVN security officials in Long An province acquired two Communist documents. One was either a copy of "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam" or a close paraphrase of it; the other was entitled, "Ban So Ket Hoc Tap ve 'Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam'" (Preliminary Report on the Study of 'The Path of Revolution in the South'); both documents may be found in Race, compiler, Vietnamese Materials, Microfilm Reel No.I, Documents Nos.1002 and 1002b.

¹¹² "Tang Cuong Doan Ket, Nang Cao Tinh To Chuc Va Boi Duong Chi Khi Chien Dau Trong Toan Dang", op.cit.

of all the people from North to the South. The basis of this strength is the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam - the North. Therefore we must pay special attention to the consolidation of the North, turning it into a stable and powerful foundation for the struggle of all of the people in order to consolidate peace and realize national unification, complete independence and democracy throughout the entire country.¹¹³

"Consolidating the North" was a short-hand expression for a broad range of developmental activities currently being undertaken in the DRVN. Pham Van Dong summarised these developments under five main headings and they provide an indication of the breadth encompassed in the phrase "consolidating the North": (1) land reform; (2) economy and finance (agriculture, industry, small industry and handicrafts, communications, posts and telegraph, commerce, finance and banking); (3) cultural and social affairs (mass education, anti-illiteracy, publications, movie-making, theatre, hospitals and sport); (4) domestic affairs (public order and security, minority policy, religious freedoms); and (5) national defence (regularisation and modernisation of the Viet-Nam People's Army).

The VWP decided to stress "economy and finance" for the immediate future. Priorities arising from the decision were clearly spelled out in the final communique of the 11th Plenum:

The [11th plenary] session decided that the general line of economic and financial work in 1957 will be as follows: all economic and financial work must aim at encouraging

¹¹³ Pham Hung, "Dau Tranh Cho Thong Nhat Nuoc Nha", op.cit.

an increase in production and the practice of frugality. Production should be developed under the leadership of the State-owned economy and of the State itself. In the overall national economy agricultural production will be the main task. Light industry and handicraft production are the key points at present. All economic and financial plans and policies must aim at consolidating the North while at the same time winning over the South¹¹⁴

It seems quite clear that there were impelling reasons behind this new policy emphasis. Firstly, areas of dissatisfaction remained, despite the fact that "good preliminary results" had been obtained in the rectification of errors campaign. According to Hoc Tap the "ideological situation of various social strata" had become "rather complex".¹¹⁵ In the countryside "hooligans and subversive elements" were still active. In the cities both cadres and workers were dissatisfied with their "standards of living" and were impatient over the slowness of efforts at improvement. In certain areas speculation and hoarding of goods were reported. Elsewhere, according to Hoc Tap, demands were made for so-called "capitalist freedoms" (defined by the Party's

¹¹⁴ "Thong Cao Cua Hoi Nghi Lan Thu 11 (mo rong) Cua Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Lao Dong Viet Nam" [Communique of the Eleventh Enlarged Plenary Session of the Central Executive Committee of the Viet-Nam Workers' Party], Nhan Dan (January 12, 1957), No.1043, pp.1 and 4; unfortunately the microfilm reproduction of this issue of Nhan Dan is illegible in many parts and I have had to rely on the English translation provided by the Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, January 12, 1957.

¹¹⁵ "Tang Cuong Doan Ket, Nang Cao Tinh To Chuc Va Boi Duong Chi Khi Chien Dau Trong Toan Dang", op.cit.

journal as "freedom without discipline") which affected social life in the urban areas adversely from the Party's point of view.

Secondly, the Party was affected by these developments too. Hoc Tap frankly admitted that organization building within the Party was "slow" and that friction had arisen between old and new cadres and that problems persisted in coordinating the tasks of the land reform cadres with those cadres engaged in the readjustment of organizations.¹¹⁶ Pham Hung acknowledged that although the interrelatedness of Party policy in the North and in the South had been expounded since 1954 it had "not yet been fully realised in the policies, activities and in the mass organizations" in the North.¹¹⁷ He argued that further education would be necessary before people saw the relationship between consolidating the North and achieving national unification. Indeed, this problem was a two edged one as both southern regroupees as well as northerners had to be convinced.¹¹⁸

C. The 11th Plenum: Maintaining the Southern Movement

"Consolidating the North" was only one prong of a three-pronged strategy designed to bring about Viet-Nam's unification. The second prong, "maintaining and developing

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Pham Hung, "Dau Tranh Thong Nhat Nuoc Nha", op.cit.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.; Hung states, "[t]oward the South Vietnamese cadres and compatriots regrouped in the North we must be more solicitous and we must adopt a correct policy in order to increase unity and to make them realize more clearly their duties, to make them become more confident and enthusiastic".

the struggle movement in the South", was not discussed in public in any detail. It was, however, discussed at some length in private. The conclusions which emerged were embodied in a document entitled, "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam".¹¹⁹ We know from subsequent accounts that this was a major policy review which settled for a time the arguments over North-South priorities and whether or not revolutionary violence and/or armed force should be employed at this time.

According to Ta Xuan Linh this document was drawn up by "the leaders in Nam Bo ... at the end of 1956" and was based on their experiences in carrying out the Party's line of peaceful political struggle in the period following the 1954 Geneva Conference. Linh wrote:

The gist of this document is as follows:
 The advance of the revolution in South Viet Nam must rely on the force of the masses. Political struggle must be supported by military activities in the fight against the US-Diem policy of repression and terror so as eventually to overthrow the fascist dictatorship in Saigon and win back power for the people. (emphasis added)¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ This document has been translated variously into English as "The South Vietnam Revolutionary Path", "The Path of the Revolution in the South" and "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam"; the latter formulation has been adopted because it was provided by a semi-official source who may have had access to the Vietnamese language original. Jeffrey Race, in a private conversation with the author, has suggested that he has had second thoughts and would probably translate "Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam" into English as "The Line of Revolution in the South"; Interview Bangkok, July 20, 1972. Nhu Phong, who has identified Pham Hung as a possible co-author with Le Duan translates the work as "The Revolutionary Lines for South Vietnam".

¹²⁰ Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet Nam", op.cit., p.22.

As we shall discuss below, the decision acknowledging that "military activities" (i.e. force) could now support political struggle activities was a major one. This decision was not a carte blanche to resume all-out guerilla struggle however. At the most basic level it resolved a growing dispute within the Party brought on by the evident failure of its policy of peaceful struggle and reliance on the framework of the Geneva Agreements to achieve unification. According to a captured Party history which reviewed this period:

...after 20 July 1956, the key cadres and Party members in South Vietnam asked questions which demanded answers: "Can we still continue to struggle to demand the implementation of [the Geneva] Agreement given the existing regime in South Vietnam? If not, then what must be done"? A mood of skepticism and non-confidence in the orientation of the struggle began to seep into the party apparatus and among some of the masses.¹²¹

This same history made it explicitly clear that a crisis had arisen over southern policy and that the decisions taken in late 1956 were momentous:

At the end of 1956 the popularization of the volume by Comrade [Le] Duan entitled "The South Vietnam Revolutionary Path" was of great significance because the ideological crisis was now solved...the volume outlined a new strategic orientation for the South Vietnam revolution, a strategic mission in which everyone could have some confidence: It is necessary to continue the national democratic revolution in South Vietnam and it is necessary to use force to overthrow the feudalist imperialist regime in order to establish a revolutionary democratic coalition and create the conditions for the peaceful reunification of the Fatherland.¹²²

¹²¹ Working Paper, Appendices, Item 301, p.3.

¹²² Ibid. Emphasis in original.

The importance of the decision to sanction the use of force should not be under-estimated.¹²³ The policy which was spelled out in "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam" was mainly a justification for not taking immediate, and presumably, premature action. On the one hand the restriction on the use of force had been removed; yet on the other hand no encouragement was given to its immediate employment. In brief, force would be used at some future time, when circumstances were ripe. With that issue resolved, cadres were enjoined to build up their organization in preparation for the future. According to Jeffrey Race, a secret directive accompanied "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam" which was sent to

¹²³ Jeffrey Race concludes, "[i]t [Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam] abandoned the option of armed activity, which had been maintained as a potential alternative up until that time, and directed that the conflict was to be carried on by means of political activity, for reasons which it went on to develop"; this is somewhat misleading for, on the one hand, no discussion of armed violence can be found in the Vietnamese document which Race used, on the other hand, Party sources are quite explicit in stating that it did sanction the use of force. The apparent contradiction may be explained by observing that force was sanctioned in the struggle to overthrow the Diem regime but that it was not to be used until the revolutionary movement in Nam Bo had been built up. Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., p.77. Elsewhere I have written "although the Party authorised a modification in its policies of using force in the South, it did not countenance a radical shift in direction which would have absorbed both precious resources and manpower [needed in the consolidation of the North]". I did state, however, that Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam did not sanction the use of armed force in its text; Thayer, "Origin of the National Liberation Front", op.cit., pp.12-13.

all Party members in Nam Bo operating at province level and above.¹²⁴ It authorized a "limited policy of violence known as 'extermination of traitors' (tru gian)". It was kept secret so as not to cause confusion among lower level cadres who were now being instructed in organization-building tasks.

D. On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam

It seems worthwhile to discuss at some length the argumentation and conclusions embodied in "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam". Although a copy of the original is not available we are fortunate in having a

¹²⁴ Race, "The Origins of the Second Indochina War", op.cit., p.355 states, "From the viewpoint of the rank and file, among whom the document [i.e. Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam] was circulated, there were not Party activities involving violence during this period. However, in a separate secret directive circulated only down to province level, the Party authorized a limited violence policy known as tru gian or 'extermination of traitors'... " In War Comes to Long An, p.82-83, Race writes, "Although the period after the circulation of 'The Path of the Revolution in the South' was supposedly one of purely political activity, 'extermination' activities were considered essential to the survival of the Party's apparatus. They were carried on in absolute secrecy, however, not even being acknowledged within the Party itself below province level". This latter account does not mention secret directives (although they are implied) nor does it tie the tru gian directives to Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam as does his first account.

In a personal letter to the author answering my query on this matter Race wrote, "I never saw such a document [a secret directive authorizing the extermination of traitors], only was told of it by informants As for whether the directive was sent with DLCMMN [Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam] or separately, I do not recall that this was specified, but my assumption is that it would have been separate, since one was an internal secret document and the other was an open document for indoctrination of lower-level cadres". Jeffrey Race letter to the author, September 14, 1976.

lengthy summary as well as study guidelines based on the original document. Both manuscripts discuss the situation in Nam Bo in detail and therefore provide unprecedented insights into VWP thinking at this time.¹²⁵ They are also important because they served as the Party's basic policy document until at least the last quarter of 1958.

¹²⁵ Jeffrey Race has failed to make it clear in all his published writings that the copy of the document entitled Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam which he uses may not be the Central Committee original but a close summary or paraphrase of it produced perhaps by the Nam Bo Regional Committee or even a subordinate level provincial committee. Race document 1002 is undoubtedly an authentic Communist document which was captured by RVN security officials and retyped for wider distribution. Unfortunately the process appears not to have been accomplished without editorialising on the part of the typist. China (Trung Quoc) is rendered "Trung Cong" (Communist China), for example. In the absence of the original it is of course impossible to know how many other changes were made. According to William Gausmann, the former editor of Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes (a publication whose stock in trade is the translation and publication of captured Communist documents) and his senior translator, Pham Thuy Dung, Race document 1002 (Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam) was probably authored in Nam Bo for reasons of style and spelling. They both feel that it also lacks the "polish" of a Central Committee directive. Interview with William Gausmann and Pham Thuy Dung, Saigon, May 30, 1972.

Two years later Gausmann wrote the following: "I've wondered a bit as to whether Race's document 1002 is the full text of 'The Path of the Southern Revolution'. Mr Dung swore it was not, tho it may be an honest enough (even the GVN) copy of a genuine Com[munist] summary. But stylistically it isn't right. This is not to say that it doesn't represent the main thrust of the full original - but as you know it's sometimes the fine print that matters". Private communication to the author, July 3, 1974.

I am led to believe that Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam (Race document 1002) is an authentic document because a quotation from the Central Committee directive entitled "Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam" which appears in Tinh Hinh Nam Bo (p.32) is almost identical to a passage in Race document 1002. I am not persuaded that Race's document is in fact a copy of the Central Committee original; nevertheless Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam and Ban So Ket Hoc Tap Ve 'Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam', op.cit. are extremely valuable sources for this period.

The Nam Bo summary of "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam" is divided into two sections. Section one presents the ideological and theoretical explication of the new strategy, whereas section two provides historical argumentation justifying it.

The policy document begins by stating that the Central Committee has set forth three main missions: (1) consolidation of the North, (2) strengthening of the movement in the South and (3) gaining the sympathy and support of the world's people.¹²⁶ "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam" then focuses almost exclusively on the second mission which it states is composed of three aspects: (1) the revolutionary movement in the South, (2) forms of struggle for the revolutionary movement and (3) guidelines for the movement.

¹²⁶ These three points are also made by Pham Hung in his speech before the 6th Session of the National Assembly; Pham Hung, "Dau Tranh Cho Thong Nhat Nuoc Nha", op.cit. Race document 1002, Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam, states that the Central Committee put forth these three missions, cf. pg.1; a point accepted by Race, presumably also on the basis of his interviews with high-level defectors from the Party; Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., p.75. Linh specifically states that "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam" was drawn up by "the leaders in Nam Bo". Race also writes that the document was "given wide circulation among Party members in the South in the closing months of 1956". Much of the foregoing suggests that a draft document was prepared by Le Duan and other cadres in Nam Bo during 1956 and that it was discussed widely before being transmitted to the North. It may have been discussed at the 10th Plenum, as I have previously suggested but for various reasons was not approved until the 11th Plenum in December. The mere fact that Race's document makes mention of "the recent Presidential election" in America precludes it from having been circulated before early November. The final version obviously bore the Central Committee's stamp of approval.

(1) The revolutionary movement in the South

The main objective of the movement in the South, according to the policy review, is the overthrow of the U.S.-Diem regime which will only be possible when the situation throughout all of Viet-Nam is ripe. "Why?", it asks. Because the revolutionary movement in the South is (1) part of a nation-wide movement sharing national objectives while (2) at the same time it is a southern movement with its own specific objectives.

South Viet-Nam is classified as a neo-colony of the United States. Therefore, according to the document, the targets of the revolution consist of both U.S. imperialism and Vietnamese feudalism. In any neocolonial relationship between a foreign power and a client state certain contradictions are inevitably bound to arise. In Viet-Nam's case four specific contradictions are enumerated:

- (a) the contradiction between the people's desire for peace versus the warlike policies of the U.S.-Diem regime;
- (b) the contradiction between the people's desire for national unification versus the policy of partition of the U.S.-Diem regime;
- (c) the contradiction between the people's desire for democratic rights versus Diem's dictatorial rule;
- (d) the contradiction between the people's livelihood versus the selfish interests of the U.S.-Diem regime.

According to "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam" the people's "just aspirations" arise from these contradictions and it is the Party's duty to educate the people so they truly understand them. Three demands are marked out for attention:

- (a) for peace, independence and reunification
- (b) for democratic freedoms, protection of life and property and for material and spiritual development
- (c) for full employment, pay and land rent reduction.

In short, the workers and peasants must be shown by the Party how their interests are adversely affected by neo-colonialism.

(2) Forms of struggle for the revolutionary movement

According to the policy document, in order to select the correct form of struggle three considerations must be taken into account:

- (a) the world situation
- (b) the situation and prospects within Viet-Nam
- (c) the balance of forces between revolution and counter-revolution.

The situation inside Viet-Nam is affected by the world situation which is characterized by the document as one in which the forces of neutralism (India, Burma and Indonesia) as well as the strength of the socialist bloc are increasing. These developments, it is stated, have helped to isolate the United States in the world arena. Further, the recently acquired atomic capacity of the Soviet Union is alleged to have created an international situation favourable to the forces of peace. In such a climate, it is argued, revolutionary ends can be achieved by peaceful means, not only in Viet-Nam but elsewhere in the world.

"On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam" pointed out that the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU affirmed that

(1) all international conflicts can be settled by peaceful means and that (2) revolutionary movements can also develop peacefully. The document includes the standard disclaimer that this strategy may be altered if the forces in power resort to repression. So far as Viet-Nam is concerned, it is concluded, violence is unlikely due to the overwhelming aspirations of the Vietnamese people for peace.

(3) Guidelines for the revolutionary movement

A revolutionary movement can develop according to a peaceful line, it is stated, because the political force of the people is the key, not armed force.¹²⁷ In the face of Diemist repression, the document asks, is this possible? It answers affirmatively arguing that as the Party relies on the people and is intimately bound up in supporting their aspirations no repression can be successful. The Diem regime is isolated and therefore cannot rely on the support of any political force.

Difficulties in the present state of the revolutionary movement in the South are ascribed to the fact that it is underdeveloped. Two reasons are advanced to account

¹²⁷ This point has been made elsewhere in almost the same words; according to Pham Hung, "but the factor that determines victory is the strength, unity and spirit of struggle of all the people from the North to the South". See: Pham Hung, "Dau Tranh Cho Thong Nhat Nuoc Nha", op.cit. Pham Van Dong, in his report before the National Assembly's 6th Session stated, "[t]he factor deciding the victory of this struggle is the people, the strength of unity of the people, their degree of awareness, organization and spirit of struggle..." See: Pham Van Dong's remarks as broadcast by the Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, January 2, 1957.

for this: (1) the objective difficulties encountered in 1954 from changing from a strategy of armed struggle to peaceful struggle and (2) the subjective difficulties caused by cadres who failed to rely on the power of the people and who failed to develop appropriate struggle techniques.

According to "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam", every movement has its periods of ascendancy and decline. Therefore in order to be successful a revolutionary movement must be conducted according to various forms. At present revolutionary cadres have been targeted by the Republic of Viet-Nam. The RVN has been successful in depleting the Party's strength and lowering ~~its~~ ~~the~~ capabilities. But, according to the Party's analysis, if the cadres continue to mingle with the people and defend their interests the Party will never be destroyed because the Party and the people are one. To destroy the Party one would have to destroy the people.

The first section of the document ends with the conclusion that the foregoing analysis has shown that a policy of peaceful struggle is the best one considering (1) the present situation in the world; (2) the situation throughout Viet-Nam; and (3) the situation in Nam Bo.

Section two of "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam" reviews the past history of the Party's activities since 1930 and lists five major lessons which can be drawn from that experience. The inference is that these lessons are directly applicable to the present era.

1. To exploit a favourable international situation it is necessary to have an internal force in being. Here it is argued that the August Revolution of 1945 (that is when favourable external conditions were created in the wake of Japan's sudden surrender) could not have been successful without relying on the internal revolutionary force which had been built up since the Party's founding fifteen years earlier.

It is further pointed out that at present "some cadres" have only relied on the development of a favourable international situation instead of developing the strength of the revolutionary movement. These cadres have become pessimistic when no favourable conditions developed and consequently when the movement failed to develop. The main question, according to the document, is how to develop a revolutionary force?

2. A revolutionary movement needs a Marxist-Leninist Party in the vanguard, it is alleged. The Party must provide the leadership of the revolutionary movement and it must adopt a working-class view-point and pursue a policy opposed to imperialism and feudalism. Toward this end the Party must organize a national united front composed of the worker-peasant alliance in coalition with the bourgeoisie and certain patriotic elements.

3. The worker-peasant alliance must be strong. In the past the Party provided decisive leadership and was able to rally the people through the creation of a strong front and through implementation of the "land-to-the-tiller" program. Today, the document states, some cadres have

raised the issue of class struggle. Although it is necessary to protect the peasants' rights, the new strategic mission, according to "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam", calls for "united^{ing} all middle, poor, landless peasants with rich peasants to counter the feudalists and the landlords. Each landlord, however, must be treated as a separate case".¹²⁸

In the urban areas the workers are poverty stricken and unemployed. Therefore, according to the policy review, it is necessary (1) to be aware of the objective political situation in the cities and (2) to make the workers aware of their own interests.

If the political authority of the movement lies in the hands of the bourgeoisie, the document warns, or a representative of that class, the Party's leadership position will be affected adversely. And this will be detrimental to the revolution. Therefore the Party must strengthen the worker-peasant alliance, develop Party control over it, then create a national front in which other classes will be included.

4. Strengthen and develop the national front. During the period 1930-31, the study points out, the emphasis was on class struggle (during the Nghe-An soviet period). In 1941 the Party was more "realistic" in stressing the national democratic character of the revolution. According to "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam" the nature of the national front varies with the historical period as it

¹²⁸ Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam, op.cit., p.12.

responds to the objective situation of that period. The most important mission for the Party then is to strengthen, develop and consolidate the national united front.

In the past, the document states, errors were committed. Leftist tendencies emerged in the 1930's and rightism was prevalent in the conduct of certain land policies.¹²⁹ Today, as Viet-Nam is divided, the task is very complex. However, the analysis concludes, the program and platform of the Fatherland Front are suitable for the anti-U.S.-Diem struggle.

The Fatherland Front should (a) strengthen the worker-peasant alliance and (b) promote patriotism among the bourgeoisie, intellectual class and among the intellectuals and students. Both intellectuals and students can play an important role in the patriotic movement according to "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam". Today, it states, with the exception of certain progressives, most intellectuals have not defended their interests. The Party should therefore conduct propaganda among this group.

Concerning the bourgeoisie, the document notes, they are indignant in the face of the My-Diem domination of South Viet-Nam. Therefore the Party should organize and motivate them as well as others of a different social

¹²⁹ The reference to "leftist tendencies" seems clear; however the reference to "rightism" is obscure. Race suggests that "rightism" refers to the fact that the VWP actually returned land to its original owners after it had been confiscated during the 1956 land reform campaign. "Rightism" was a Chinese term of criticism of this Vietnamese practice according to Race who cites an unnamed defector. See: remarks appended to the microfilm copy of Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam, op.cit.

strata around these issues: democratic freedoms, establishment of a national democratic government in the South, the normalisation of North-South relations and peace, democracy, independence and reunification. The Party must also rally well-known personalities and other patriotic intellectuals to the front. The Party must also consolidate the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao and Catholic leadership with whom it has had good relations in the past. Finally, the Party should attempt to win the support of RVN personnel, especially those in "popular organizations" (i.e. youth and women's groups).

5. Take advantage of the contradictions in the enemy's ranks, isolate him and introduce our agents into his ranks. The nature of the relationship between the United States and Diem is unequal, states the document. There is also discontent over the regime's (Diem's) nepotism. Accordingly the Party should endeavour to divide the enemy ranks and activate sympathetic ("friendly") forces in his ranks. The Party should also strive to isolate the U.S.-Diem leadership from subordinate ranks and take advantage of any dissension in (a) the hamlets and villages, (b) in military camps and installations, (c) in political parties, (d) in RVN organizations and (e) within the ranks of the U.S. imperialists. Further directives are promised in the policy review.

Section two ends with a four-point set of conclusions:

- (1) the revolution must be led by a Marxist-Leninist Party based on the worker-peasant alliance.
- (2) a broad worker-peasant alliance must be created.

- (3) a national united front must be developed, expanded and consolidated.
- (4) the enemy's internal contradictions must be exploited, the enemy must be isolated and the Party's forces must be introduced into his ranks.

The concluding section of "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam" listed five reasons why the revolutionary movement would overcome its difficulties and succeed.

These advantages were listed as follows:

- (1) the strength of the North
- (2) the patriotism of the people in the South
- (3) the favourable international situation
- (4) the weakness and isolation of the enemy
- (5) the use of the 1954 Geneva Agreements as a legal base.

E. The 11th Plenum: Winning the Sympathy and Support of the World's Peoples

The third prong of the VWP's revised strategy was concerned with the conduct of the DRVN's foreign relations, which various Party spokesmen summed up under the following headings: "winning the sympathy and support of the world's peoples", "re-establish normal North-South relations", and "continue to rely on the Geneva Agreements". These phrases captured the flavour of a foreign policy orientation designed to obtain external backing for the twin domestic policies of consolidation of the North and

the strengthening and development of the revolutionary movement in the South (on the basis of the Geneva Agreements).¹³⁰

Pham Van Dong, in his report to the National Assembly's 6th Session,¹³¹ advanced two major propositions in this regard: (1) that membership in the socialist camp was the "key" and (2) that the Geneva Agreements provided a "legal basis" for the DRVN's externalisation efforts. According to Dong, the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, as a member of the socialist bloc, was bound by the "spirit of internationalism" to cooperate closely with its fraternal allies "in all fields - political, economic and social". This relationship was mutual for "(t)he friendship between our country and the socialist and people's democracies is a sure guarantee of the independence and prosperity of our country and for our people's struggle to consolidate peace and achieve the reunification of our country".

The "key" to this relationship was the "further strengthening" of relations with all socialist countries, and with the Soviet Union and China in particular. Dong

¹³⁰ An official VWP review of thirty years of diplomatic activity states: "During the years that followed the conclusions of these agreements [i.e. 1954 Geneva Agreements], in our diplomatic activities, we persistently endeavored to assert the justice of these fundamental rights [independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity], while asking for international support and assistance for the economic restoration and the start of socialist construction in the north"; Nguyen Duy Trinh, "Thirty Years of Diplomatic Struggle" Vietnam Courier (December 1975), New Series No.43, p.18.

¹³¹ Quotations in this and the following paragraphs are taken from: Vietnam News Agency broadcast in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0529 GMT, January 2, 1957.

left no doubt that "the fraternal assistance of the countries of the socialist camp" (i.e. Russia and China in particular) had made an important contribution to the consolidation of the North. In return the DRVN gave loyal and predictable support to those issues on which the bloc was united: opposition to the Anglo-French operations in the Suez and support for Soviet intervention in Hungary. Otherwise Dong steered a middle course on other issues, endorsing Russian and Chinese policies almost equally:

The government of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam fully supports the proposals of the Soviet Union to ban the testing of weapons of mass destruction, for a reduction in armaments, for the abolition of military blocs, for the dismantling of bases in foreign countries and for the signing of a treaty of collective security in Europe The government of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam supports China's proposals for the elimination of all aggressive military blocs in Asia and the signing of treaties between all the countries concerned to maintain peace in the Pacific region.

With regard to his second proposition, Dong stressed the importance his government still attached to the 1954 Geneva Agreements. "These agreements", he said, "are a good basis for our struggle to consolidate peace and achieve national unity. We must continue to maintain throughout the legal basis of the Geneva Agreements, mobilize the people firmly throughout the country and mobilize world public opinion to urge that the South Vietnamese administration respect and implement these agreements, and urge that the countries participating in the Geneva Conference fulfil their tasks. The Geneva Agreements represent a great victory of the Vietnamese people. We must thoroughly apply these agreements in the revolutionary

struggle of our people aimed at reunifying our Fatherland".

It is important to note the stress given by VWP officials to the "legal basis" of the Geneva Agreements. In their eyes these agreements still had a valuable use for they acknowledged the "independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial unity" of Viet-Nam. Any repudiation of these Agreements, in public or private, would have had the most serious consequences. Since the DRVN was in no position to prevent the United States from aiding the Diem regime let alone forcing the RVN's compliance ^{with} ~~of~~ the political provisions ^{of} ~~with~~ the Agreements, it had to be content with wringing every bit of propaganda value out of them (especially alleged violations by the RVN and U.S.). Neither could the DRVN bring much pressure to bear on the Soviet Union outside of calling public attention to the alleged responsibilities of conference participants. With regard to France, Pham Van Dong could merely hint that "economic and cultural relations" might improve if France "as a signatory to the Geneva Agreements" fulfilled its responsibility for the implementation of the Agreements.

In private, and especially when confronted by criticism from those cadres who disagreed with post-Geneva strategy in Nam Bo, the VWP maintained that one of the reasons why reunification did not come about was excessive reliance on the Agreements¹³² as a means of arousing popular support. The Party still maintained that

¹³² Cf. Ban So Ket Hoc Tap Ve 'Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam', op.cit., p.1.

the Agreements were useful, for in its view, many people in the South desired the normalisation of North-South relations. In this context, the political provisions of the Agreements provided a useful, but by no means exclusive, source of appeals. Pham Hung put the issue succinctly, "The legal basis of the Geneva Agreements is a good support enabling us to step up the political struggle, but the factor that determines victory is the strength of the unity and the spirit of struggle of all the people from the North to the South".¹³³

In terms of international relations, Hung stated that "(o)ur basic stand is that the Geneva Agreements must be respected and their implementation continued. The South Vietnamese administration is bound by the Geneva Agreements and is France's successor in implementing them...."¹³⁴ Although Hung once again raised the issue of re-convening the Geneva conference "to discuss measures to implement the Geneva Agreements" neither he nor other Party officials could have expected anyone to take heed of it.

Thus by early 1957 the VWP had weathered its worst storms - revolt in the North, set backs in the South - and in the calm that followed prepared to implement a comprehensive two-year strategy designed to bring about Viet-Nam's unification. There was no doubt that the new policies would take time, for Party and government officials continually stressed the "long and arduous" nature of the

¹³³ Pham Hung, "Dau Tranh Cho Thong Nhat Nuoc Nha", op.cit.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

struggle. Le Duan, the secretary of the Party's Regional Committee for Nam Bo, was recalled to the North at this time.¹³⁵ Thus the foremost advocate of more militant policies in the South was brought into the inner circle of decision-making: the Party's Politburo. From that vantage point Le Duan began to play a decisive role in overseeing the consolidation of the North and the development of the revolutionary movement in the South. Duan, it seems, assumed many of the duties of Party Secretary-General in advance of formal (and public) confirmation to that post in September 1960.¹³⁶ His elevation was to have decisive impact on subsequent developments.

¹³⁵ United States Central Intelligence Agency, The North Vietnamese Party Leadership (Langley, Virginia: typescript, 1972), p.10, states that he probably remained in the South until mid-1957. Thomas Latimer, a former CIA analyst who presumably had access to the more extensive files of radio monitoring reports than are included in the U.S. FBIS Daily Reports, states that no public reference to Le Duan was made until September 1957. The first reference to Le Duan to appear in the BBC, Summary of World Broadcasts, Part V, The Far East, comes in issue No.707 (October 15, 1957), which quotes a Vietnam News Agency dispatch of October 8, 1957. The first reference to Le Duan in the U.S. FBIS Daily Report comes in issue No.204 (October 21, 1957), p.EEE3, which cites Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, October 19, 1957. Cf. Thomas K. Latimer, "Hanoi's Leaders and their South Vietnam Policies, 1954-1968", Ph.D. Thesis, Georgetown University, 1972, pp.50-51.

¹³⁶ Rostow asserts that Le Duan became de facto Secretary-General of the VWP; W.W. Rostow, The Diffusion of Power (New York: Macmillan Company, 1972), pp.41 and 43. Honey, "North Vietnam's Party Congress", op.cit., p.71, states that on at least one occasion prior to 1960 Le Duan signed himself as the Party's Secretary-General. I have been unable to find any such evidence however.

PART 2

ON THE REVOLUTION IN THE SOUTH

CHAPTER 7

REVOLUTION IN THE SOUTH: MAJOR DOMESTIC POLICIES OF THE DIEM REGIME (January 1957-December 1958)

I. INTRODUCTION

While the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam grappled with a series of domestic problems in the last quarter of 1956, its southern counterpart, the Republic of Viet-Nam, moved into a new period of apparent stability and economic development. As chapter five detailed, from mid-1956 onwards Diem firmly consolidated his regime. Major opponents of his government, pro-French non-Communist nationalists and the sect forces, had been rendered impotent. The success of the first phase of the Anti-Communist Denunciation Campaign (ACDC) had been greatly exaggerated. On the one hand, the Party was engaged in a reduction of cadres movement, designed to trim its underground organization for the struggle ahead. On the other hand, Party policy had not yet sanctioned armed self-defence or other acts of systematic violence against Diem. Thus the Party's low profile coincided with the optimistic view from Saigon. As this chapter will demonstrate, this view was an illusion.¹

¹ "Diem's self-deluding propaganda in 1956-57 had the effect of lulling some Vietnamese and some Americans into believing that his regime, by its truly bold actions against the sects and the Binh Xuyen in 1955 and by his rejection of Ho Chi Minh's overtures in 1955-56, had won the day against the Communists as well. In 1956, for example, he boasted that he had restored peace and control even in the Camau peninsula - where the Communists are still entrenched to this day [i.e. 1965-66]. Diem failed to have - certainly failed to voice - a clear perception of the Communist

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During the period from March 1957 to mid-1958 the Diem regime briefly relaxed its anti-Communist suppression in the countryside. This was not to say however that the Party's organization was ignored, as certain areas of Central Viet-Nam were still the focus of regime attention. During this lull the Party started reconsolidating its organization while at the same time resisting the initiatives of the Diem government and capitalizing on the ineptitude of the RVN administration. Tran Van Bo (Le Van Chan), a former deputy secretary of the Party's Western Nam Bo Interprovince Committee, summed up the situation in this way:

We can say with absolute certainty that by 1956 the Party was weakened.... In 1957 the Party began to recover, because of a number of not very intelligent actions and policies on the part of the [Diem] government, which the Party exploited. Among these actions and policies the most deserving of attention were Ordinances 2 and 57 of the land reform program, which automatically restored to the landlords who had followed the French all the lands granted to the peasants during the Resistance...?

There were a range of RVN "actions and policies" in addition to the conduct of land reform which the Party exploited. This chapter will consider: the role of the military, the Anti-Communist Denunciation Campaign, rural resettlement, land reform, non-Communist political development and the increasing influence of the United States.

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danger until well into 1957. But when he did, in 1958 and 1959, others - Americans and Vietnamese - thought he was crying wolf..."; in Frank N. Trager, Why Viet Nam? (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), p.161.

² Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., p.97.

VIET NAM: POLITICAL MAP



II. THE ROLE OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM ARMED FORCES

A. Military Operations³

In mid-1956 two military operations were launched against sect and Communist forces in Nam Bo. Operation Truong Tan Buu concentrated on the eastern delta provinces while Operation Thoai Ngoc Hau covered central and western Nam Bo. Both operations continued until February 1957, although the Party would later attribute subsequent military activity in eastern Nam Bo to a continuation of the Truong Tan Buu campaign.

In October 1956 the commander of Operation Truong Tan Buu, Gen. Mai Huu Xuan, held a review of progress. According to press accounts he declared that with the defeat of the sect forces "the battle was over".⁴ Although Xuan did acknowledge that the Communists were capable of continuing sporadic guerrilla action he nevertheless signalled a change in RVN tactics to small unit security operations. In Ba Ria province, for example, General Xuan presided approvingly over a ceremony of black pyjama-clad province officials who were inaugurating a new civic action program designed to

³ "The Times of Saigon [sic] on October 3, 1959, quoted General Myers, deputy chief of MAAG (Military Aid and Advisory Group) [sic] at the time, summing up operations during the previous year, as follows: 'If I remember well, out of ten divisions, six were thrown into action to a greater or lesser extent, over half the logistics services participated with the support of the entire river services of the Navy'", quoted in Wilfred G. Burchett, The Furtive War (New York: International Publishers, 1963), p.30.

⁴ Journal d'Extreme-Orient (October 19, 1956), p.5.

counter dissident activity.⁵ Although further details were not provided the press hinted that combined civil-military units would henceforth conduct pacification in the countryside. In Bien Hoa province in August 1956 the following activities were undertaken by the RVN province chief in conjunction with military units assigned to Operation Truong Tan Buu: a population census, formation of village councils, the establishment of inter-family groups,⁶ the recruitment of civil guards and the creation of youth groups. The population was also mobilized to assist the army in repairing roads, building bridges, constructing schools and making sports grounds. The army, for its part, distributed medicine as well as anti-Communist propaganda.⁷

On the military side Operation Truong Tan Buu stimulated the defection in October of some 45 soldiers, members of the Cao Dai Trinh Minh The regiment. The following month ARVN units conducted a sweep in Tan Uyen district located in the famous Zone D base area "to destroy the last remnants of the Communist Viet Minh".⁸ In December press accounts revealed that 302 "outlaws" had been arrested and 63 "rebels" had rallied.⁹ Thereafter, until the operation was formally ended in February 1957,

⁵ The origins of the civic action program are reviewed briefly in Lansdale, In the Midst of Wars op.cit., pp.207-213. The originator of the idea, Kieu Cong Kim, died in 1957 and his organization was absorbed by Ngo Dinh Nhu.

⁶ These are described in Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress op.cit., pp.169-170.

⁷ Journal d'Extreme-Orient (October 15, 1956), p.5.

⁸ Ibid., October 3, 1956, p.5 and November 30, 1956, p.5.

⁹ Ibid., January 4, 1957, p.5.

few details of military operations were reported in the press.

Elsewhere Operation Thoai Ngoc Hau concentrated its attention on the Mekong Delta provinces in the south. During August-November 1956 ARVN units moved into Ha Tien province to conduct operations against a "Viet Minh rebel zone" in the Tra Tien plain along the Giang Thanh river and Vinh Te canal. Several arms caches were uncovered in the nearby Trai and Giang Thanh hills.¹⁰

Both Operation Truong Tan Buu and Operation Thoai Ngoc Hau provoked complaints to the International Control Commission (ICC) by the PAVN High Command. According to these protests both operations were a violation of article 14(c) of the Geneva Agreements which prohibited reprisals against former members of the Resistance. As Joseph Buttinger has rightly pointed out "(v)ery little reliable information has come out of Vietnam about the manner in which these and later campaigns to uproot the Vietminh were conducted by the army and political cadres specially trained for these campaigns".¹¹ Nevertheless the claims by the PAVN High Command (as set out in Table 7-1) set an upward limit on the number of victims. There can be no

¹⁰ Ibid., November 24, 1956, p.4.

¹¹ Buttinger, A Dragon Embattled, op.cit., Vol.2, pp.975-976; Buttinger goes on to state, "It is of course impossible to accept as true the fantastic claims and accusations of Communist propaganda, which counts the number killed and imprisoned in the hundreds of thousands..." Official Communist figures, which may be inflated, are clearly distinguishable from Communist propaganda claims as will be readily apparent from the figures presented in Table 9-7.

TABLE 7-1

RESULTS OF OPERATIONS TRUONG TAN BUU AND THOAI NGOC HAU
(July 1956-Feb. 1957)

<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Arrested</u>	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>
July-September 1956	3,016	136	68
September 1956-February 1957	1,984	300	30
TOTAL	5,000	436	98

SOURCES: Vietnam News Agency, January 24, 1957 and May 25, 1958

doubt of ARVN's anti-Communist objectives. At the conclusion of Operation Truong Tan Buu General Mai Huu Xuan stated that one of his three main aims was the destruction of "the Viet-Cong organization".¹²

From about mid-1957 onward, especially after October, a rural insurgency was ignited (see chapter eight). By the following year the two paramilitary forces were suffering casualties at the rate of 40 men per week.¹³

By way of response the Diem government launched a new series of pacification operations in the countryside.¹⁴

From March-October 1958 Operation Tho Lo was launched against

¹² Journal d'Extreme-Orient (April 17, 1957), p.3; the other two objectives were: assuring the security of the people and raising their living standards.

¹³ American objectives for the Vietnamese Army were to maintain limited internal security and to offer limited resistance to a conventional attack by PAVN regulars. Increasingly the latter became the most important objective; see "US Training of the Vietnamese National Army", United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.4., p.24.

¹⁴ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.138.

dissidents in Binh Dinh and Phu Yen provinces. In April Operation Nguyen Trai (I) swept through the eastern Nam Bo provinces of Binh Duong (Thu Dau Mot), Binh Long, Bien Hoa and Tay Ninh. In September Operation Nguyen Trai (II) shifted its operations to An Giang, An Xuyen, Ba Xuyen Kien Giang, Phong Dinh and Vinh Long provinces in western Nam Bo. Meanwhile, during July-August 1958, Operation Hong Chau tackled the Chau Boi region along the Cambodian border.

B. U.S. Training and Support

During the months July-September 1957 all ten ARVN divisions¹⁵ were withdrawn from the countryside and put through an American-styled training program. The end result, as could have been expected, was the creation of a Vietnamese Army on the American model. In late 1958 ARVN began a period of reorganization which lasted until September 1959 by which time seven so-called "improved divisions" of 10,000 men each had been created from the previously existing 6 light and 4 field formations created by the French.¹⁶

After completion of the American-sponsored training program in September (1957) ARVN units emerged equipped to

¹⁵ We Open the File (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), p.35; Details of Operation Nguyen Trai are given in "First Phase of Psy-War Operation Closing", The Times of Viet-Nam (July 4, 1958), Vol.2, No.142, p.1.

¹⁶ "US Training of the Vietnamese National Army, 1954-1959", in United States-Vietnam Relations 1945-1967, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.4. Chronology pp.NN which cites the Weekly Intelligence Digest 30-58.

conduct warfare along conventional lines.¹⁷ Throughout the period of retraining both the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps (see below) took prime responsibility for the maintenance of rural security.

C. The Paramilitary Forces

American influence was brought to bear on the Diem government with respect to the paramilitary Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps. In 1956 Diem transferred the Civil Guard from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of National Defense. According to Pentagon analysts:

Diem envisaged the CG [Civil Guard] as a large and powerful military organization accountable to him through his appointed province chiefs - a counter to the army in the struggle for power which would also provide provincial security through mobility from posts outside the villages...¹⁸

The Michigan State University (MSU) Vietnam Advisory Group,¹⁹ on the other hand, adopted a different view. MSU

¹⁷ Ibid., p.PP which refers to a history prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff unavailable to the author; see also the main body of the study, section G, pp.24-30. Bernard B. Fall has written "American military planning in Viet-Nam was utterly disastrous, for it created a road-bound, over-motorized, hard-to-supply battle force totally incapable of besting the real enemy (i.e. the elusive guerrilla and not the Viet Minh divisional regular) on his own ground". Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, op.cit., p.325.

¹⁸ "US Training of the Vietnamese National Army", loc.cit., p.22.

¹⁹ On the role of the Michigan State University Vietnam Advisory Group see: Michigan State University Vietnam Advisory Group, Final Report (Saigon: mimeographed, June 1962) held by the US Library of Congress; Robert Scigliano and Guy H. Fox, Technical Assistance in Vietnam: The Michigan State University Experience (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965); and Robert Scheer, How the United States Got Involved Vietnam (Santa Barbara: Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, July 1965), especially pp.33-38.

had originally been contracted to the United States Operations Mission (USOM) to provide advice to the Civil Guard. They felt that the Civil Guard should be:

a national police [force], civilian in character and function, lightly but adequately equipped with sufficient delegated authority and training to enforce all laws, control subversion, and collect intelligence data in areas not covered by municipal police, as well as establishing close ties with the population of the rural areas by fixed basing in the villages within pacified areas.²⁰

In July 1957 MSU opposed Diem's request for sixty million U.S. dollars to provide the Civil Guard with heavy equipment.²¹ MSU suggested a more modest grant of between U.S. \$14-18 million for light equipment. The American Military Assistance Advisory Group in Viet-Nam (MAAG) supported MSU at least initially despite a compromise reached in 1958 by which U.S. \$14 million would be provided for the purchase of equipment (including "heavy" items). Diem refused to transform the Civil Guard along American lines. As a result U.S. aid was withheld for two years. It was not until January 1959 that Diem finally agreed to transfer the Civil Guard to the Interior Ministry.

In the meantime the Civil Guard continued to function at Diem's direction operating only with non-American surplus handed over by ARVN. In late 1956 selected units of the Civil Guard were put through an ARVN training program at the Quang Trung military school. A year later Civil Guards

²⁰ "US Training of the Vietnamese National Army", *loc. cit.*, p.22.

²¹ Such as armored vehicles, bazookas, artillery, landing craft and helicopters; Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, *op. cit.*, p.201; see also Duncanson, Government and Revolution in Vietnam, *op. cit.*, p.281-282.

participated in pacification operations alongside ARVN professionals.

The United States provided salary subsidies to the Self-Defense Corps (SDC) since its formation. It too was equipped with non-American ARVN surplus. According to Pentagon analysts "the SDC was in even worse shape than the CG. The controversy that engulfed both these organizations for five years [1955-1960] produced two paramilitary units that, far from being adequate to free the army for 'combat' were confusingly organized, inadequately equipped, poorly trained, and badly led - even when compared with ARVN".²²

In 1955 the strength of the Civil Guard (Bao An) stood at 50,000 while that of the Self-Defense Corps (Dan Ve) was estimated at 40,000 (these grew in numbers to 72,000 and 80,000 respectively by mid-1963).²³ Both of these organizations were assigned a principal role in maintaining internal security. Their lack of training and poor leadership was to prove unfortunate for the Diem regime.²⁴ According to Robert Scigliano the Civil Guard served "as a dumping ground for inferior army officers". The Self-Defense Corps, locally recruited and village-based,

²² "US Training of the Vietnamese National Army", loc.cit., p.23; and Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.164.

²³ Ibid., p.47 and 164; Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.288 states that the Civil Guard totalled 68,000 in 1955 and decreased in strength to 40,000 in 1959.

²⁴ "the Civil Guard...is regarded by the Southern peasant as a symbol of insecurity and repression" in David Hotham, "South Vietnam - Shaky Bastion", The New Republic (November 25, 1957), p.36-38.

was provided with rudimentary training and, according to the same source "(a)s a result...was hardly adequate to the task of defending villages, roads, and other local strategic points against armed attacks by Communist guerrillas".²⁵

This view is also shared by Denis Duncanson, a British observer, who noted "the village militia or Local Defense Corps (at first Tu Ve, later Dan Ve) was made up of poorly trained hamlet guards with a maximum operating strength of a platoon, supervised by the nearest contingent of the Civil Guards but nominally 'commanded' by the village administrative committee".²⁶

D. The Draft²⁷

On May 2, 1957 Diem issued decree 183/qp which announced universal conscription into the regular army for a period of twelve months. Two years later, in January 1959, service was extended for an additional six months. Mobilization for draft aged youths (20-21 years), which began on August 1, 1957, aimed at a target figure of 60,000 men.²⁸ Due to opposition and administrative inefficiency this deadline was postponed until November 14th. According to Communist accounts some 15%-20% of those eligible evaded their military obligations.²⁹

²⁵ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.164.

²⁶ Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.254.

²⁷ According to Duncanson, "Conscription remained in force from before the Geneva Conference, but it was to be several years before it became necessary to call men up for the ranks", *ibid.*, p.289.

²⁸ Vietnam Press, "Compulsory Military Service to be Applied In Viet Nam From August 1", The Times of Viet Nam Weekly (May 4, 1957), No.17, p.2.

²⁹ Vietnam News Agency, October 20, 1958; New China News Agency, October 4, 1957 and April 11, 1958.

III. THE ANTI-COMMUNIST DENUNCIATION CAMPAIGN, 1957-58

Chapter five provided details of the start of the Anti-Communist Denunciation Campaign up to May 1956 at which time a conference was held in Saigon to assess the results.³⁰ Under the impetus of this campaign ACDC directorates were established in twenty-one provinces. After the Saigon conference phase two of the campaign was launched with special attention devoted to those provinces where past progress had been slack.³¹ In central Viet-Nam these included provinces where the Communists had traditionally exhibited strength: Binh Dinh, Quang Nam, Quang Ngai and Quang Tri. In Nam Bo attention was focused on Ba Ria, Long Xuyen, Sa Dec, Tay Ninh, Vung Tau and Ca Mau provinces (most of which had not established ACDC directorates by May 1956).

The direction of the ACDC campaign was now placed in the hands of the province chiefs. In October 1956, under Ordinance 57a, these individuals were designated the government's principal agents operating directly under the authority of President Diem.³² At the same time Diem effected a provincial reorganization which altered the names and

³⁰ On May 20, 1956 the ACDC moved into "period II, stage I" The Fight Against the Subversive Communist Activities in Vietnam op.cit., p.4.

³¹ See the interview with Le Quang Binh, a former Resistance fighter, who joined the Quang Ngai province committee of the NFL in Burchett, Inside Story of the Guerilla War op.cit., p.126. In March 1957 Saigon hosted the third congress of the Asian People's Anti-Communist League. In May the RVN's Department of Information held a National Information Congress to evaluate phase two of the ACDC.

³² Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., p.21-22.

boundaries of many southern provinces.³³ In March 1957 Diem reshuffled the province chiefs giving added influence to the military who secured 14 of 21 posts.³⁴ This tendency to militarization was intensified in later years.³⁵ Diem also combined the positions of province chief and sector commander into a post to be held by a single individual with field grade military rank. Thus the top administrative and military posts were combined giving the new province chief control over the provincial bureaucracy as well as the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps.

The ACDC has been periodized by one writer as follows:

In its second phase, the campaign switched its priority target to the jungle areas along the Truong Son (the Indochinese Cordillera) and the Central Highlands....By the end of 1957 and early 1958, the central target of the 'denounce the Communists' campaign switched to the Mekong River delta where the enemy [i.e. Diem]

³³ Palmerlee, "Viet Cong Political Geography", op.cit., p.5; Appendix A in Pike, Viet Cong, op.cit., p.386 provides a list with old and new provincial names.

³⁴ "President Appoints New Chiefs for All But Three Provinces", The Times of Viet Nam Weekly (March 9, 1957), No.9, p.4.

³⁵ "The regular government structure in the provinces has likewise been affected by the trend toward militarization. In 1958, 13 of the then 36 province chiefs were military officers, and it was planned to replace most of them with civilians in the near future. By September, 1960, there were 21 military and 17 civilian province chiefs, and by August, 1962, the ratio had jumped to 36 military officers and 5 civilians in an expanded 41 provinces", Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.166; in 1963 only 5 provinces were administered by the civil service, Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.236; "Rebellion Against My-Diem", United States-Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab 2, p.44 provides percentage figures for the process: in 1958 36% of all province chiefs were military, in 1960 the figure was 58%. See also Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, March 21, 1957, 2300 GMT.

had only obtained poor results in the previous campaigns. Saigon sent its most efficient, most experienced agents from Central Viet Nam to the Mekong delta where in conjunction with the local reactionaries, they launched a campaign 'to wipe out the remaining Communist cadres', i.e. patriots and former resistance cadres. The explicit goal of this campaign was to 'root out the Communists'. Dinh Tuong province (formerly My Tho) was chosen as a pilot province in the campaign which was to spread to the surrounding areas, in particular the former resistance zones...³⁶

The above analysis, written by Ta Xuan Linh seventeen years after these events, tallies with complaints made by the High Command of the People's Army of Viet-Nam (PAVN) to the ICC at this time. From June 1956 to July 1957 the PAVN High Command filed complaints alleging reprisals against Resistance veterans in the central Vietnamese provinces of Khanh Hoa, Pleiku, Phu Yen, Binh Dinh and Thua Thien.³⁷ However the greatest attention was reserved for developments in Quang Tri and Quang Nam.

With respect to Quang Tri, the PAVN Liaison Mission to the ICC reported 685 cases of reprisals in violation of article 14(c) in the period from July 1954 to August 1956. PAVN officials alleged that 292 individuals had been killed, 534 wounded, 5,441 detained and 306 families placed in "concentration camps".³⁸ According to the same source 53 letters concerning Quang Tri alone had been posted to the ICC in the period July 1954-February 1957.

³⁶ Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet Nam", op.cit., p.22.

³⁷ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1150 GMT, March 31, 1958; *ibid.* in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0540 GMT, May 25, 1958; for an early account see Journal d'Extreme-Orient (October 17, 1956), p.5.

³⁸ Vietnam News Agency, in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, February 27, 1957.

More serious accusations were laid later in the year when it was alleged that further repression followed the conduct of the anti-Communist denunciation classes held during April 1957 in the village of Gio Linh. According to the PAVN High Command the inhabitants of Gio Linh had supported the Resistance and had numerous relatives who regrouped to the North in 1954-55. As a result the RVN authorities clamped a one-month curfew on the village during which time some 200 persons were subjected to anti-Communist propaganda in an effort to get them to denounce their political allegiances. In late April 150 suspects were arrested, including local village officials. The following month representatives from families of 19 separate hamlets, acting under duress, signed a commitment not to support the Communists.³⁹

In early 1958 anti-Communist repression was renewed in Gio Linh district. In January after a fortnight's devotion to denouncing Communism, some 32 Resistance veterans were apprehended. During March-April so-called "concentration camps" were erected in the district to house some 52 families with "Viet Minh" connections.⁴⁰ The renewal of anti-Communist repression in Quang Tri paralleled developments in neighbouring Quang Nam.

³⁹ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 1500 GMT, May 8, 1957 and Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0518 GMT, June 10, 1957.

⁴⁰ Vietnam News Agency, October 9, 1958 quotes from a letter of October 2, 1958 from the PAVN Liaison Mission to the ICC; Vietnam News Agency, January 31, 1958 and New China News Agency, May 18, 1958 which cites Lt. Col. Mai Lam, PAVN'S deputy head of the Liaison Mission to the ICC.

In March 1957 Chau Di village in Quang Nam province was subject to a similar pattern of events. A provincial ACDC team in the company of local security forces entered Chau Di and compelled 60 persons to attend a one-month program of anti-Communist indoctrination. Former members of the Resistance were forced to describe their past activities, to spout anti-Communist slogans and to malign the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam. In the end only ten persons were taken into custody. In May four further arrests of Resistance veterans were reported by the PAVN High Command to the ICC. By March 1958 a total of 700 individuals were reportedly incarcerated at the Phu Hoa "concentration camp".⁴¹

One of the most publicized events occurred in Dai Loc district of the same province. Unlike the previous examples there are non-Communist sources for what allegedly occurred. On January 17th, 1958 the Saigon daily Tu Do (Freedom) reported that 360 "ex-Communists" were subject to a four-month long indoctrination course before being turned loose in Dai Loc district. As a result of their efforts more than a thousand suspected "Communist agents" were confined to nine "re-education centres" while another 160 were imprisoned.⁴² The PAVN report of this case differs in only one detail, it asserts that between 8-9,000 persons were placed in the

⁴¹ Voice of Vietnam, dictation in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 2330 GMT, August 22, 1957; and Vietnam News Agency, November 26, 1957; *ibid.*, in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1116 GMT, June 12, 1958.

⁴² Quoted in Bernard B. Fall, "South Viet-Nam's Internal Problems", Pacific Affairs (September 1958), Vol. XXXI, p.258; and Quang Loi, South of the 17th Parallel, *op.cit.*, p.112.

re-education centers.⁴³ Both accounts reveal that some suspects were maltreated. Another case, similar to this one, allegedly occurred in Quang Nam's Que Son district where 500 Resistance veterans were supposedly detained.⁴⁴

Prior to the shift in emphasis from central Viet-Nam to the delta, the ACDC recorded only spotty success. In September 1956 one-hundred and forty-seven "Viet Minh cadres" reportedly surrendered to provincial authorities in Ca Mau.⁴⁵ By the end of the year Soc Trang province recorded a total of 1,889 ralliers.⁴⁶ In April 1957 the PAVN High Command complained to the ICC that the families of ex-Resistance fighters were being forced into "concentration camps" in the provinces of Chau Doc, Bac Lieu and Rach Gia.⁴⁷ This protest coincided with reports in the Cambodian press that military mopping-up operations were being conducted in Tan Chau district of Chau Doc with the aim of attacking sect forces and former Resistance personnel.⁴⁸

During late 1958, as Ta Xuan Linh has suggested, the pace of the ACDC picked up in the Mekong Delta. Chau D

⁴³ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0440 GMT, January 28, 1958. These PAVN figures appear excessive.

⁴⁴ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0535 GMT, March 20, 1958.

⁴⁵ Journal d'Extreme-Orient (October 3, 1956), p.5.

⁴⁶ Ibid., (January 14, 1957), p.5.

⁴⁷ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0535 GMT, April 5, 1957.

⁴⁸ Vietnam News Agency, May 2, 1957 cites reports appearing in Song Chung (Coexistence) and Trung Lap (Neutrality) both of which are published in Phnom Penh by Party sympathisers. Interview with Phan The Ngoc, Saigon, June 8, 1972.

province appears to have been the scene of major activity between August 1957 - March 1958. According to the DRVN's official newsagency more than 30,000 people in An Phu district were forced to relocate their homes away from the Cambodian frontier.⁴⁹ By March 1958 the PAVN Liaison Mission to the ICC filed reports of 42 specific cases of reprisal under article 14(c) involving the killing of more than 100 persons, the wounding of another 13, the arrest of 318 and the forced detention in "concentration camps" of an additional 4,000 Resistance veterans (the majority of whom were said to be Hoa Hao).⁵⁰

In February - March 1958 the ACDC scored a notable triumph in Cai Be district of Dinh Tuong province.⁵¹ As a result of a successful police operation five underground Party cadres were arrested with incriminating documents, including one paper which listed the names of persons to whom the underground had recently communicated. Forty-two persons were arrested the following month including three senior Party officials and one district level cadre. In addition three covert Party agents in the Dinh Tuong Civil Guard and a ring of fourteen Party members operating

⁴⁹ Vietnam News Agency, English Morse to Southeast Asia, 1115 GMT, April 7, 1958; for a related story see *ibid.*, November 19, 1957.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, in English Morse to Southeast Asia, 1130 GMT, April 7, 1958.

⁵¹ For reports on the ACDC in Dinh Tuong see: William R. Andrews, The Village War: Vietnamese Communist Revolutionary Activities in Dinh Tuong Province, 1960-1964 (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1973), p.44 which reports that all twenty members of a village Party committee had been arrested by mid-1958; the fate of a financial cadre in Dinh Tuong is mentioned in Zasloff, Origins of the Insurgency, *op.cit.*, p.13.

under various covers were apprehended.⁵² Among the latter were Ma Thi Chu and her husband, Nguyen Van Hieu, two future members of the Central Committee of the National Front for the Liberation of South Viet-Nam.

According to a CIA biographic study:

After the Geneva Accords in 1954, [Nguyen Van] Hieu apparently concentrated on propaganda activities [o]n behalf of the Viet Minh in educational and literary circles. A 1955 report lists him as active in the training of Viet Minh cadres for the Saigon-Cholon area. He was arrested by Vietnamese authorities around July 1958 for pro-Communist activities but was released the following October on National Day.⁵³

Hieu's underground status was confirmed later by Party sources. According to an item carried by the Liberation Press Agency:

Since 1946, he [Nguyen Van Hieu] acted covertly in the press circles teaching staff and artist circles in Saigon...Later [i.e. sometime during 1951-59] he was a member in the Guiding Committee of Artistic Activities, Propaganda and Education belonging to the leadership of the Nam Bo revolution.⁵⁴

Ma Thi Chu's background was also described by the CIA's biographic study:

[A]fter the Geneva Accords she became an assistant professor in the School of Pharmacy in Saigon. Together with her husband, she continued to work against the South Vietnamese government until she was arrested in early 1958 for her participation

⁵² "Communist Cell for Subversion of Free Viet-Nam Press Discovered", The Times of Viet-Nam (March 21, 1958), Vol. 2, No.62, p.1-2; "Communist Ring Uncovered in Cai Be District", Ibid. (March 22, 1958), Vol.2, No.63, p.3 and Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 0510 GMT, June 26, 1958.

⁵³ United States Central Intelligence Agency, Memorandum, (September 22, 1965), op.cit., Appendix, p.A-37.

⁵⁴ Liberation Press Agency (Saigon) in English, 0935 GMT, April 7, 1976.

in Communist activities. Released some five or six months later, she apparently left with her husband for an NFLSV-controlled area.⁵⁵

Years later Mrs. Chu was quite candid about her past when she visited Australia as part of a women's delegation. According to a transcript of her interview on the ABC radio:

We [my husband and I] worked a long time underground work in Saigon. And our parents helped us.

QUESTION: Could you tell us a bit about your day-to-day life in being underground? I think not many people in Australia really understand this.

Yes. We can say that we have two lives. One legal. I am a pharmacist. I had an office in Saigon and so I openly, legally I worked everyday on [sic] my office. But behind this I have underground work. And that must be very secret. [We must not] let anybody know. Our friends, our really close friends cannot know. And we must be secret. We do not reveal anything we know. Even with friends, with good friends, only when we are in the same cell of three persons we discuss our problems. And three persons...ehh...one of the three persons forms with another two persons another cell, and so on, and so on and so on and so we have a very large movement. But very secretly, you see? And that is why if one of the three persons is arrested the other two escape. [They] get out of police search... We cut the file...I don't know the word for this...

...But for myself in 1957 [sic] I was discovered by the Saigon police. And I was arrested by them...

QUESTION: How long were you under arrest for?

In jail? More than one year. But they had nothing for me. They put in my dossier that I have been arrested because I get one Viet Cong in my house. And that Viet Cong was my husband.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Memorandum (September 22, 1965), op.cit., p.A-27.

⁵⁶ The transcript of the interview with Ma Thi Chu was prepared from a tape recording of her talk with a woman activist on the ABC Radio, April 6, 1975, Mrs. Chu was a member of a women's delegation which visited Australia in March-April 1975. Cf. The Age (April 2, 1975). Mrs. Chu's expression "we cut the file" is almost certainly the English equivalent for the French "couper le fil" which means literally "to cut the wire" or, in this case, "to sever the connection".

It is of course impossible to cross check all complaints made by the PAVN High Command with independent sources.

Joseph Buttinger has warned that

Communist claims of countless massacres of civilians in the sweep by the South Vietnamese Army into Vietminh controlled areas cannot be taken as evidence, nor can the reports of Wilfred Burchett, which, though they cannot be dismissed altogether, are certainly also Communist propaganda. The ICC reports in this respect are inconclusive, chiefly because the Diem regime prevented the ICC teams from pursuing their investigation.⁵⁷ (emphasis added)

Communist accounts themselves are also often contradictory. The following table sets out the cumulative data provided by DRVN sources. Although they were issued with the

TABLE 7-2

RESULTS OF THE ANTI-COMMUNIST DENUNCIATION CAMPAIGN TO 1959

Time Period:	Reprisals	Killed	Wounded	Arrested	Missing	Detained
by February 1956 ^a	-	1,563	4,636	40,768	732	-
by October 1956 ^b	5,529	1,775	4,725	53,350	761	10,024
by April 1957 ^c	5,777	2,124	5,159	57,353	778	10,000
by November 1957 ^d	6,172	2,148	4,182	65,211	880 ^e	10,024
by February 1959 ^f	-	4,971	10,185	183,843	-	10,000

SOURCES: ^a Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, 4 May 1956.

^b Letter from Brig. Gen. Phan Trong Tue, head of the PAVN High Command, dated 10 May 1957, to Ambassador T.N. Kaul, chairman of the ICC; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1130 GMT, 14 May 1957.

⁵⁷ Buttinger, A Dragon Embattled, Vol.2, op.cit., p.1156, fn. 111; accounts by Burchett appear in The Furtive War, op.cit., p.36-41; Inside Story of the Guerrilla War, op.cit., p.121-128;

cont'd

SOURCES ^c Nhan Dan, 3 December 1957.

cont'd:

^d Vietnam News Agency, 1 November 1958.

^e Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, 7 August 1958.

^f Quang Loi, South of the 17th Parallel (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959), p.21; Loi cites documents prepared by PAVN. Wilfred G. Burchett, The Furtive War (New York: International Publishers, 1963), p.38 states these figures, prepared by the PAVN liaison office to the ICC, cover the period 11 April 1955 to 31 January 1959.

disclaimer that they were based on "incomplete figures" these estimates nevertheless serve as an upper limit in determining the effectiveness of the RVN's anti-Communist denunciation campaign.

Table 7-3 sets out the same figures arranged by time period. From this display one observes that the most intense period of the ACDC fell during November 1957 and February 1959. The period February 1956-November 1957 appears less intense than the period before (July 1954-February 1956) or after. Thus there are grounds for the assertion by Party leaders that during 1957 the Party apparatus experienced a brief period in which it was able to recover.

It should be noted that the ACDC was directed indiscriminately at opponents of the Diem regime. These

57 cont'd

and Vietnam Will Win! (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), p.50-51. Independent scholars as well as former Party cadres (and internal Party documents captured by RVN forces) agree that the ACDC was widespread, indiscriminate and brutal; see: Joseph Zasloff, Origins of the Insurgency, op.cit., p.9-11; Lacouture, Vietnam: Between Two Truces, op.cit., p.28-31 and Philippe Devillers, "The Struggle for the Unification of Vietnam", The China Quarterly (January-March 1962), No.9, p.9-15.

TABLE 7-3

RESULTS OF THE ANTI-COMMUNIST DENUNCIATION CAMPAIGN
BY TIME PERIOD

Time Period	Killed	Wounded	Arrested
July 1954 - February 1956	1,563	4,636	40,768
February - October 1956	212	89	12,582
October 1956 - November 1957	373	457	11,861
November 1957 - February 1959	2,871	5,185	126,490

SOURCES: Same as table 7-2 above.

included both Communists and non-Communists alike.⁵⁸ Among the latter were ex-Resistance veterans who were not Party members. These individuals were subject to the same

⁵⁸ Scheer, How the United States Got Involved in Vietnam, op.cit., p.40; Zasloff, Origins of the Insurgency, op.cit., p.9 has written, "Not only the active Party members, but large numbers of the inactive, whether or not they were still loyal to the Vietminh, were harassed, persecuted, arrested, and in some cases executed [as a result of the ACDC]. In many areas this local oppression also included the so-called 'Vietminh families', that is to say, those who had sons among the regroupees in the North or relatives who were involved in insurgent activities in the South...". Also: P.J. Honey, "The Problem of Democracy in Vietnam", The World Today (February 1960), Vol.16, No.2, p.73, writes "There are, in the Republic of Vietnam, establishments euphemistically known as Political Re-education Camps. Each one of these camps contains some thousands of detainees who have never faced a court trial and who have never received a fixed sentence. The declared purpose of the camps is to teach those favourably disposed towards Communism the errors and shortcomings of Communist doctrine and practice. This writer has visited such camps and talked with the guards and instructors there and, though not permitted to question the detainees themselves, had long conversations with former inmates who have now been released. The consensus of the opinions expressed by these people is that there are a number of real Communists in the camps, but that the majority of the detainees are neither Communists nor pro-Communists. It is popularly believed that persons are placed in the camps because they have been critical of the regime".

abuses as Communist cadres during 1956-59 and found themselves confined to "re-education centres". Although estimates vary on the number of detainees at this time, non-Communist estimates put the total over 50,000.⁵⁹

IV. RURAL RESETTLEMENT

In order to cope with the influx of refugees who regrouped from the North in 1954-55 (660,000 of whom were totally dependent on outside aid⁶⁰), and to alleviate rural

⁵⁹ The Republic of Viet-Nam's Information Ministry published a document in 1960 which stated that 48,200 persons had been arrested between 1954 and 1960, Georges Chaffard, Indochina: dix ans d'indépendance (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1964), p.168-169; Philippe Devillers has estimated that as many as 50,000 were held in RVN jails in late 1956; in Kahin and Lewis, The United States in Vietnam, op.cit., p.100; In May 1956 the RVN's Secretary of State for Information put the figure of detainees at between 15-20,000, Osborne, "The Tough Miracle Man of Vietnam", p.166; a figure of 30,000 prisoners in 1960 was provided by Time (November 21, 1960) cited in Scheer, How the United States Got Involved in Vietnam, op.cit., p.59 and for 1962 by Nguyen Thai Binh, Viet-Nam: The Problem and A Solution (Paris: Viet-Nam Dan-Chu Dang [Viet-Nam Democratic Party], 1962), p.71. Fox Butterfield, in his summary of the Pentagon Papers, places the number of detainees at between 50-100,000. A search of the original U.S. Government edition by the author failed to turn up a reference to the figure of 100,000. Butterfield's estimate of 50,000 relies on Kahin; Butterfield, "Origins of the Insurgency in South Vietnam", in Sheehan, compiler, The Pentagon Papers op.cit., p.17. The relevant section in the U.S. Government's edition may be located in "Rebellion Against My-Diem", United States-Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab 2, p.27-29. Interestingly a Communist writer has cited Butterfield's figure of 100,000 approvingly in his estimates of the number of persons jailed during the course of the ACDC: Viet Hong, "Vai Net Va Dau Tranh Vo Trang Va Luc Luong Vo Trang o Nam bo Truoc Cuoc Dong Khoi 1959-1960" [The Armed Struggle and the Armed Forces in Nam Bo Before the 1959-1960 General Uprising] Nghien Cuu Lich Su [Hanoi] (March-April, 1974), No.155, p.40. Hong is a high-level cadre in the Liberation Armed Forces in Nam Bo who took part in the events of the period.

⁶⁰ Foster Hailey dispatch from Cai San (20 February 1957) in The New York Times (March 3, 1957), p.24.

poverty in central Viet-Nam, the Republic of Viet-Nam initiated a massive program of population resettlement into the rural areas. Security considerations went hand in hand with humanitarian ideals as plans were drawn up to create a "living wall" of new villages along the Viet-Nam-Cambodian frontier from Kontum province in the north to Ca Mau in the south.⁶¹ Various aspects of this program had unanticipated consequences for the RVN.

Two separate programs were inaugurated in the Highlands. One, begun in April 1957, involved the resettlement of indigent families from the central Viet-Nam coast.⁶² The pace of the program was revealed in various contemporary press accounts. According to correspondent Bruce Russell, 31,000 peasants had been settled in 22 so-called land development centres (LDC's) by July 1958, 18,000 of whom had been moved to the Highlands during the first year alone.⁶³ By 1963 two-hundred and twenty-five LDC's had been

⁶¹ John D. Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid: American Experience in Southeast Asia (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), p.73. For a general discussion of various aspects of early refugee relief and settlement see Lindholm, editor, Viet-Nam: The First Five Years, op.cit., pp.45-105, especially the discussion by Bui Van Luong and Joseph J. Harnett.

⁶² Committee on Government Operations, House of Representatives, United States Congress, Land Reform in Vietnam (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), 20th Report, 90th Congress, 2nd Session, p.8; Warner, The Last Confucian, op.cit., p.139-140; Vietnam Press, "The President of the Republic Visits the Highlands", The Times of Viet-Nam (January 14, 1958), Vol.2, No.11, p.1; Vietnam Press, "Quang Ngai People Participate in Land Development Program", ibid. (April 12, 1958), Vol.2, No.83, p.1-2; and Vietnam Press, "Six New Land Development Centers Created in Highlands", ibid. (May 17, 1958), Vol.2, No.102, p.1.

⁶³ Bruce Russell, "New Life Surges in the Highlands", The Times of Viet-Nam (July 14, 1958), Vol.2, No.150, p.1. "Commentary: Fall on Father Harnett", in Lindholm, loc.cit., p.93.

created which embraced 52,182 families (274,945 individuals) settled on 112,443 hectares of cultivated land.⁶⁴

In 1958 the Diem government inaugurated the second program, the Highland Resettlement Scheme, which planned to build 80 centres for 88,000 people on 13,000 hectares of land.⁶⁵ All too often the actual resettlement was accompanied by the use of force.⁶⁶ In the face of the resultant local opposition the scheme began to founder and in 1960 virtually ended. Before this, however, several uprisings on the part of Highland montagnards had been provoked. According to one writer:

But here [in the central Highlands], Saigon ran into the resistance of the ethnic minorities which culminated in the armed uprisings of the Raglay tribe in the Western part of Ninh Thuan province, the Bahnar tribe in Vinh Thanh in the western part of Binh Dinh province in early 1958, and the Cor and Hre ethnic minorities in Western Quang Ngai in 1959.⁶⁷

In the lowlands, where refugee resettlement had begun as early as 1955, five agricultural exploitation zones (AEZ) were created in October 1957.⁶⁸ These were:

⁶⁴ Gerald C. Hickey, Some Recommendations Affecting the Prospective Role of Vietnamese Highlanders in Economic Development (Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation, September 1971), P-4708, p.26-27. It has not been possible to construct figures showing the pace of resettlement for individual years from 1957-60.

⁶⁵ Hickey, Some Recommendations, op.cit., p.27.

⁶⁶ Radio Hanoi, 1200 GMT, November 11, 1957; Bernard Fall has written, "The mountain tribesmen of the vast plateau area which covers almost 65 percent of South Viet Nam were the subject of political and economic oppression which American experts as early as 1957 considered tantamount to genocide". Fall, "Viet Nam in the Balance", Foreign Affairs (October 1966), Vol.45, No.1, p.6.

⁶⁷ Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet Nam", op.cit., p.22.

⁶⁸ Vietnam Press in The Times of Viet Nam (October 1, 1957), Vol.1, No.1.

1. Dong Thap Muoi A.E.Z. (Kien Tuong and Kien Phong)
2. An Xuyen - Ba Xuyen A.E.Z.
3. A.E.Z. No.1 (Binh Tuy, Phuoc Tuy, Long Khanh, Phuoc Long and Binh Long provinces)
4. A.E.Z. No.2 (Bien Hoa, Binh Duong, Tay Ninh and Long An provinces)
5. Cai San A.E.Z. (Kien Giang - An Giang)

The most publicized of the zones was the Cai San resettlement area where between 40-43,000 persons were relocated on 30,000 hectares of land which had been abandoned during the war.⁶⁹ Press reports indicated that 5,500 persons had been placed in the Dong Thap Muoi A.E.Z. and 19,839 persons resettled in the An Xuyen - Ba Xuyen A.E.Z. by late February 1958. Unfortunately figures are lacking for the other A.E.Z.'s.⁷⁰ Here too there was resistance on the part of some communities at being required to relocate a second time since migrating to the South. In several areas parish priests articulated this discontent only to find themselves at odds with the Diem regime.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Robert M. Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority: The Process of Change in Land Relations and Land Attitudes in Vietnamese Villages of the Mekong Delta Since 1954", Ph.D. Thesis, The University of Washington, 1968, p.124-126. "Commentary: Alfred L. Cardinaux on Father Harnett", in Lindholm, loc.cit., p.90.

⁷⁰ Vietnam Press, "Dong Thap Muoi Land Development Zone Towards Full Prosperity", The Times of Viet Nam (April 9, 1958), Vol.2, No.76, p.1 and 3-4; Vietnam Press, "An Xuyen - Ba Xuyen Land Development Area Develops Steadily", *ibid.* (April 10, 1958), Vol.2, No.77, p.5.

⁷¹ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, March 5, 1957, *ibid.* in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0430 GMT, April 26, 1957; and Vietnam News Agency, December 18, 1957.

There are two main reasons why this resettlement effort was significant. Firstly, the influx of lowland Vietnamese into the Highlands immediately sparked off racial animosity between the new settlers and the Highland minority groups.⁷² This explosive situation was only made worse by the heavy handed efforts of the RVN to forcibly re-settle montagnard groups.⁷³ Further, included among the lowland migrants who were "formerly under complete Vietminh control [were]... families the new authorities considered unreliable...[a]s a result, the settlements, though reinforced by a sprinkling of demobilized soldiers, took on the wretched aspect of banishment camps..."⁷⁴ As we shall note in the next chapter, the Party underground was alert to this situation.

Secondly, the resettlement program did not provide free land to the refugees even though "(t)he government choose the settlement sites, cleared the land, transported the settlers, allocated plots, and provided food, livestock, seed, and other supplies..."⁷⁵ This policy gave rise to

⁷² One result was the emergence of a montagnard racial consciousness which cut across linguistic groups; see the discussion of the Bajaraka Movement below.

⁷³ Gerald Hickey has written, "the Highland Resettlement plan, under which Highlanders were forced off their ancestral land and into 'reservations'". (emphasis added); Hickey, The Highland People of South Vietnam: Social and Economic Development (Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation, September 1967), Memorandum RM-5281/1, p.28.

⁷⁴ Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.247. Dispatch from Phuoc Long (October 29, 1957) in The New York Times (October 30, 1957), p.11 states that "Many discharged servicemen had joined settlers adding to national guard and reserve militia strength."

⁷⁵ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.105; Warner, The Last Confucian, op.cit., p.139-140 writes: "Settlers from the impoverished coastal areas were resettled in the much more fertile and sparsely populated High Plateau waited in vain for titles to their new settlements. They were assigned garden plots and could work on communal farms:

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to grievances between the government and the settlers. At Cai San, for example, the new tenants were permitted to purchase their land over a six year period. Robert Scigliano has commented on this situation as follows:

[the] peasants have not been able to understand why they have to sign tenancy contracts for unoccupied land which they assumed the Diem government was giving them. At the large Cai San development in southwestern Vietnam, for example, there was so much resistance to tenancy contracts by the 43,000 resettled refugees that the government cut off daily subsistence payments in order to bring the refugees around.⁷⁶

In order to grasp the crucial importance of this issue it is necessary to turn to the larger issue of the RVN's so-called land reform program.

V. LAND REFORM⁷⁷

The Mekong Delta area of South Viet-Nam, in terms of landholdings and ownership, is characterized by great inequality.⁷⁸ In 1954 one quarter of one percent of the

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but the incentive of private ownership on their agricultural lands was still lacking".

⁷⁶ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.123; Fall, "South Viet-Nam's Internal Problems", op.cit., p.251 has written; "in January, 1958, the provincial governor of Kien Giang, which includes Cai-San, appeared at the settlement with an escort of Civil Guards to explain to the farmers that the word 'distributed' used in their land contracts was not to be confused with 'definitely granted', and that they owed rent or purchase payments to the 'rightful owners' of the land. Needless to say, the situation became explosive, the refugee farmers claiming that they had been 'duped' by the authorities".

⁷⁷ This section relies on a variety of sources including: Government Operations Committee, Land Reform in Vietnam, op.cit., pp.1-12; Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., chapters 4-7; Wolf Ladejinsky, "Agrarian Reform in the Republic of Vietnam" in Wesley Fishel ed. Problems of Freedom: South Vietnam Since Independence (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), pp.153-176; Price Gittinger, "Agrarian Reform", in Lindholm,

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rural population owned 920,000 hectares of riceland, or roughly 40% of the total. Put another way, 44% of the arable land was in the hands of owners whose estates were larger than 100 hectares in size. 49% of the cultivated land was owned by 1% of the landowners whose holdings exceeded 100 hectares in area. At that time the average farm plot in the delta was 1.5 hectares.

There were 1,330,000 farmers in the delta at that time. Six thousand three-hundred of whom owned 1,035,000 hectares (45% of the total). Another 183,000 small holders (representing 72% of all landowners) owned 345,000 hectares, or 15% of the total rice land. According to Robert Sansom there were an estimated one million tenants in the Mekong Delta area (77% of the total number of farmers) whose average family size, according to another writer, was 5.5.⁷⁹ When the number of tenant families are added to the number of landless (2 million) the total figure, 8 million persons, represents nearly 80% of the Delta population.⁸⁰

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editor, Viet-Nam: The First Five Years, op.cit., pp.200-208 and the discussion on pp.209-213; and David Wurfel, "Agrarian Reform in the Republic of Vietnam", Far Eastern Survey (June 1957), Vo..XXVI, No.6, pp.81-92.

⁷⁸ Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., p.108, fn.6, states that inequality in the Mekong Delta was the worst in Asia. All figures in this section have been converted to hectares for purposes of comparability. One hectare is equal to 2.47 acres.

⁷⁹ Robert L. Sansom, The Economics of Insurgency in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1970), p.55. Sansom found the average size of a Delta family to be 7.7 persons; James B. Hendry, The Small World of Khanh Hau (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1964), p.12 found the average size to be 5.5 in 1958-59.

⁸⁰ Sansom, The Economics of Insurgency, op.cit., p.55; and Price Gittinger, "Rent Reduction and Tenure Security in Free Viet Nam", Journal of Farm Economics (May 1957), Vol.XXXIX, No.2, p.430.

It has been estimated that the total amount of cultivable land in South Viet-Nam (mainly in the delta but including the central coast line too) was around 2,300,000 hectares. Nearly 221,000 hectares of which was abandoned during the Resistance War.⁸¹ Both the Catholic Church and the French community (433 individual owners) owned extensive landholdings: 262,000 ha. and 229,000 ha. respectively.⁸²

Prior to the Resistance War the tenant's lot was precarious indeed. He had little or no security of tenure and he was forced to pay exceedingly high rental rates amounting to as much as 50%-60% of the crop. Quite often debt on the interest of loans borrowed to buy seed exceeded the original loan by as much as 70%.⁸³ During the Resistance large numbers of landowners retreated to the safety of the major towns and cities. These were individuals who possessed large rural estates. During 1946-48, according to one writer, "(t)he gradual retreat...became a panic-stricken exodus to escape intimidation, assassination, or trial and probable execution by the Viet Minh".⁸⁴ Rent

⁸¹ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.104; Wilfred Burchett, My Visit to the Liberated Zones of South Vietnam (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1966), p.71 claims that 400,000 hectares of land were redistributed; Pike claims only 5,000 ha., Pike, Viet Cong, op.cit., p.277.

⁸² Communal land in Nam Bo (74,000 ha.) was also exempt; Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., p.117.

⁸³ Sansom, The Economics of Insurgency, op.cit., p.56 and 61; on the interest on loans see: Jumper and Normand, "Vietnam", op.cit., Gittinger, "Agrarian Reform", op.cit., p.200

⁸⁴ Sansom, The Economics of Insurgency, op.cit., p.55; on terror directed against the landlords see: Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., p.93-95. Cf. the testimony of Bui Cong Tuong, a former Party cadre in

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reduction for rural farmers was decreed by the insurgent DRVN government first in 1949 and later, on a nation-wide scale, on December 4, 1953.⁸⁵ As a result of DRVN policy tenants experienced the twin benefits of land redistribution,⁸⁶ taken from large landowners and especially absentee landlords, and rent reduction.⁸⁷ To be sure the peasant-farmer had tax obligations to the Resistance government but these financial obligations were seen as being different from traditional rent. The impact of this program must have been considerable as the Party controlled over fifty percent of the villages outside the sect areas in the Delta.⁸⁸ After Geneva, and only as a result of prodding by American and French officials,⁸⁹ Diem reluctantly agreed to act on the question of land reform which, as we have seen, was of vital concern for four-fifths of the population

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Kien Hoa province, who asserted "In 1945 or 1946, if you came to Ben Tre Province, you could see each day the corpse of a landlord in the river water, with a [death] sentence pinned to his chest". Quoted by Robert F. Turner, "Expert Punctures 'No Bloodbath' Myth", Human Events (November 11, 1972) reproduced in The Human Cost of Communism in Vietnam - II. The Myth of No Bloodbath, op.cit., p.39.

⁸⁵ Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., p.99-101 and Fall, The Viet-Minh Regime, op.cit., p.119-138.

⁸⁶ According to Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., p.92 the average amount of land redistributed amounted to 5-10 cong, or .5 to 1 ha.

⁸⁷ Rent was reduced by as much as 80%, *ibid.*, p.92.

⁸⁸ Homer Bigart in The New York Herald Tribune (March 1, 1955) quoted in Hammer, The Struggle for Indochina 1940-1955, op.cit., p.360; there were an estimated 3 million persons in the liberated zones; Burchett, North of the 17th Parallel, op.cit., p.213.

⁸⁹ Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.242; Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.121; there had, of course, been previous attempts at land reform by the State of Viet-Nam but these remained on paper, see

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of the Mekong Delta. In early 1955 President Diem issued two ordinances, number 2 (8 January)⁹⁰ and number 7 (5 February). Ordinance 2 attempted to provide security of tenure to tenants by placing limits on rent. Ordinance 7 provided additional guarantees for tenants who were farming land abandoned during the Resistance.⁹¹ In 1956 Diem attempted to deal with the pressing problem of land redistribution and ownership with Ordinance 57 (22 October). Although a Commissariat General for Land Development was created the following year progress was remarkably slow. It was not until 1958, and only after a change of directors, that land redistribution made some progress.

Under Ordinance No.2⁹² the RVN attempted to protect a farmer's security of tenure by requiring that all tenancy agreements be drawn up in writing on government-approved contract forms and that these contracts be registered in the village concerned. There were two types of model leases. The first (type A) ran for three years and permitted the owner to recover his land only if he or his family intended to work it themselves. Under the second (type B) contract, a tenant was granted a five-year lease that was renewable at the end of the period by mutual agreement.⁹³ This contract

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Gittinger, "Rent Reduction and Tenure Security", op.cit., p.433-434.

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid., and Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., p.109-112. Ordinance 57 expired on December 31, 1955 and was replaced by Ordinance No.28 on April 30, 1956; Gittinger, "Agrarian Reform", loc.cit., p.201.

92 Gittinger, "Rent Reduction and Tenure Security", op.cit., p.433-434.

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was liable to termination if the tenant's rent fell into arrears. Under the terms of either contract, rents were limited to between 15% and 25% of the main crop depending on soil fertility.⁹⁴ Additional payment, not to exceed 12%, had to be made for any implements, animals or seeds provided by the landlord. Loans given by the landlord to the tenant were also subject to limitation as they were not allowed to exceed an annual rate of interest of 12%. Agrarian Reform Committees were supposed to be formed at the village and district levels to oversee implementation of Ordinance No.2 and to arbitrate any disputes which might arise in coordination with provincial agrarian reform committees. On the face of it the application of Ordinance No.2 appeared successful for by mid-1959 eighty percent of all tenanted land (774,000 contracts) had been duly registered.⁹⁵

Ordinance No.7⁹⁶ addressed itself to the problem of abandoned land. Under its provisions village councils were

⁹³ "Any increase of yield resulting from a farmer's investment or use of improved technique belonged to the tenant without any increase of rent". Cf. Robert Shaplen, The Lost Revolution (New York: Harper Colophon Books, Revised Edition, 1966), p.144. There were in fact three types of contracts; Type C, "to be used when the landlord or his personal agent was not present to sign the lease, is the same as Type B except that the Communal Council 'acts on behalf' of the absent landlord in drawing up the contract". Wurfel, "Agrarian Reform in the Republic of Vietnam", op.cit., p.87.

⁹⁴ Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., p.110; Gittinger, "Rent Reduction and Tenure Security", op.cit., p.430 indicates that this was a drop from the traditional 50%.

⁹⁵ Duncanson, "Government and Revolution", op.cit., p.96; Committee on Government Operations, Land Reform, op.cit., p.9. Gittinger, "Agrarian Reform", op.cit., p.203.

⁹⁶ Gittinger, "Agrairan Reform", op.cit.; Gittinger, "Rent Reduction and Tenure Security", op.cit., p.435.

to prepare a list for the central government of all rice land not cultivated the previous season. All landowners were simultaneously required to declare their intention either to lease the land in question or to cultivate it themselves. If the landlords chose to lease the land they were immediately subject to the provisions of Ordinance No.2. All land on which the owner had failed to file a declaration of intent was declared abandoned land. Village councils, under Ordinance No. 7, were empowered to lease this land to suitable tenants. No rent was to be collected during the first year and reduced rent was collected for the next two years. The money in rent collected by the village councils was held until claimed by the absentee owner. Although Ordinance No.7 expired on December 31, 1955, its provisions were reinstated by Ordinance No.28 issued on April 30, 1956.

The defects of ordinances nos.2 and 7 were well summarized by Robert Shaplen, a close follower of the Vietnamese rural scene:

While some peasants benefitted from this part of the land reform program, it was hindered by bad administration and lack of proper enforcement. Peasants were frequently in arrears on their rents, and the system of agrarian courts established to settle landlord-tenant disputes soon came to be dominated by the landlords and by officials friendly to them, to the obvious disadvantage of the peasants. Furthermore, the peasants objected to paying rents for land that had been unoccupied because of the war - almost a third of the total riceland.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Shaplen, The Lost Revolution, op.cit., p.144; the duties of the agrarian courts are outlined in Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., p.119-121 where he indicates that of 18,882 cases presented to the courts, 16,329 were settled; a report on Decree No.498/DT/CC

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The last point was a crucial factor influencing peasant discontent.⁹⁸ During the war years, as we have already noted, most of the large landlords fled, leaving their holdings in the countryside. According to Dennis Duncanson so too did the tenant labor who worked for them.⁹⁹ Thus during the Resistance much of the fallow land was worked by new peasants, squatters in fact,¹⁰⁰ under the Party's "Land-to-the-Tiller" program.¹⁰¹ As a result of the new RVN ordinances these people were subject to regressive measures. The absentee landlords who remained for the most part in the towns, were quite happy to collect some

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establishing the courts may be found in Vietnam Press, "Agrarian Tribunals to be Created", The Times of Viet Nam (December 10, 1957), Vol.1, No.59, p.2. Gittinger, "Rent Reduction and Tenure Security", op.cit., p.438 has observed "the high costs of legal action and the slow judicial process have combined to make recourse to the courts all but inaccessible to tenants. Only about half the villages have agrarian reform committees, and these meet infrequently and have often been irregularly appointed".

⁹⁸ "This reversal of traditional roles was caused in part by the peasants' continued recognition of earlier 'expropriation' by the Viet Minh of the land of absettees and 'traitors'. Entering into lease agreements would have validated the claim of ownership by landlords who had been thus 'expropriated'. Farmers would then have been forced to pay rent on land they felt was largely their own. Tenant reluctance was also a tribute to the continuing influence of Communist organization and propaganda. Viet Minh agents repeated incessantly in the villages that after the projected July 1956 elections, the South would come under the jurisdiction of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam which would confirm earlier Communist expropriation of land", in Wurfel, "Agrarian Reform in the Republic of Vietnam", op.cit., p.85.

⁹⁹ Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.243; Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., p.104.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.170; Committee on Government Operations, Land Reform, op.cit., p.8.

¹⁰¹ Burchett, My Visit, op.cit., p.71 and Inside Story of the Guerilla War, op.cit., p.178-179.

rent where no rent had been collected before. In many cases rent was now collected not by the landlord but by local officials or agents acting on behalf of the landlord.¹⁰² In some areas the landlord returned with RVN military forces.¹⁰³ Despite the intentions of Ordinance No.2, landlords sought to collect rent in excess of 25% regardless of soil fertility. One study conducted in 1958 puts the average rent at 25%; another study put this figure at 30%.¹⁰⁴ In fact, even as these rents were being collected, certain landlords demanded payment in full for rent unpaid during the war years.¹⁰⁵ And finally, although a National Credit Office was established in 1957 to aid the peasant farmer with temporary loans (for farm tools, livestock, and extension work) less than one-third of those eligible availed themselves of the credit service.¹⁰⁶

The plight of the rural tenant assumes even greater proportions when set against the failure of the RVN to effect any meaningful land redistribution. According to Ordinance No.57 all individual landholdings in excess of 100 hectares were liable to expropriation.¹⁰⁷ The effect of

¹⁰² Buttinger, A Dragon Embattled, op.cit., p.932; Sansom, The Economics of Insurgency, op.cit., p.56.

¹⁰³ John Mecklin, Mission in Torment (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1965), p.86.

¹⁰⁴ Warner, The Last Confucian, op.cit., p.140; Hendry, The Small World of Khanh Hau, op.cit., p.36-41; Sansom, The Economics of Insurgency, op.cit., p.56 places the rent as high as 40%. For the figure of 30% see: Gittinger, "Rent Reduction and Tenure Security", op.cit., p.438.

¹⁰⁵ Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.245.

¹⁰⁶ Warner, The Last Confucian, op.cit., p.139.

¹⁰⁷ Landlords had the first choice of land to retain and almost invariably the worst land was left for redistribution. Gittinger, "Agrarian Reform", op.cit., p.201.

this law was less sweeping than imagined however. Firstly, individual landowners were allowed to keep an additional 45 hectares, 30 hectares if the owners worked the land and another 15 hectares to be reserved for family graves (huong hoa) and temples.¹⁰⁸ Secondly, land owned by the French, Catholic Church, communal land and land belonging to absentee landlords was not subject to expropriation as was all land not devoted to rice cultivation, that is, coffee, tea and rubber plantations.¹⁰⁹ Thus of the 2.45 million hectares of cultivable land in the delta, only 650,000 ha. owned by 2,600 landlords was subject to expropriation and redistribution.¹¹⁰

There was one significant catch to the redistribution program: all prospective new owners¹¹¹ had to purchase the

¹⁰⁸ Land turned over for livestock grazing was also exempted. Registration of the land was done on an "honors system", Committee on Government Operations, Land Reform, op.cit., p.6.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.6. A description of the types and origins of communal land (cong dien) may be found in John Adams and Nancy Hancock, "Land and Economy in Traditional Vietnam", Journal of Southeast Asian Studies (September 1970), Vol.1, No.2, pp.93-94. As a result of French colonialism and the Resistance War as well as administrative changes brought about in the village councils by the State of Viet-Nam the control of village-owned (communal) land seems to have passed into the hands of the wealthy.

¹¹⁰ Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., p.114; Other estimates place the amount of land subject to expropriation at between 685,000 and 740,000 ha; see: Ladejinsky, "Agrarian Reform in the Republic of Vietnam", op.cit., p.170 (685,000 ha.); Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, op.cit., p.311 (700,000 ha.); and Gittinger, "Agrarian Reform", op.cit., p.205 (740,000 ha.).

¹¹¹ New owners were listed in the following order of priority: tenants, laborers on expropriated land, wounded veterans or relatives of war dead, refugees, unemployed, small landowners with more than five children and less than 3 ha. of land and others without land.

land from the government (for the same purchase price the government had paid) after it was expropriated from its original owners.¹¹² The old owners were offered relatively good terms even though the RVN paid for the surplus land at prices roughly one-half of the market value.¹¹³ Ten percent was paid in cash and the remainder in government bonds bearing an interest rate of 3% which matured in twelve years. The new owners, on the other hand, had six years in which to purchase a permanent title at rates calculated to equal 25% of the annual gross yield. Further, the new owners were prohibited from mortgaging the land for ten years after the date of purchase.¹¹⁴ Some observers pointed out that the purchase time was too restrictive, they suggested a time frame of from 15 to 20 years.¹¹⁵

Both land redistribution and transfer of title deeds were undertaken at a snail's pace.¹¹⁶ Part of the problem with the transfer of land titles arose from the fact that little progress in land registration had been made since 1940. Although there had been a cadastral survey it focused

112 According to Burchett, Inside Story, op.cit., p.180, only 90,000 ha. of land had been purchased by 41,000 peasant families by July 1960.

113 Details of the Price Commission may be found in, Vietnam Press, "Agrarian Reform Scored Great Success in 1957", The Times of Viet Nam (February 27, 1958), Vol.2, No.43, p.2. Ordinance 75 (April 4, 1957) provided the legal basis.

114 Trager, Why Vietnam?, op.cit., p.153. "Commentary: David Wurfel on Gittinger", in Lindholm, editor, Viet-Nam: The First Five Years, op.cit., p.209.

115 Shaplen, The Lost Revolution, op.cit., p.144.

116 Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., p.132 writes that the first formal transfer under Ordinance 57 was held in December 1958, a year later only 55,439 h.a. of 411,723 ha. available for transfer was actually given to former tenants. Gittinger, "Agrarian Reform", op.cit., p.208 says the first title was given on May 9, 1958.

TABLE 7-4
LAND REFORM UNDERTAKEN BY THE RVN (1957-1967)

Date	Amount of Land Expropriated (in hectares)	Redistributed (in hectares)	New Owners
July 1957 ^a	-	35,700	18,800
January 1958 ^b	-	104,370	49,968
May 1958 ^c	-	148,445	64,877
September 1958 ^d	-	258,969	97,229
July 1961 ^e	415,843	-	109,438
1965 ^f	440,668	247,760	115,912
October 1967 ^g	-	270,000	128,000

- SOURCES: ^a Viet-Nam Presse, July 15, 1957, p.v.
- ^b Vietnam Press, "Agrarian Reform Scored Great Successes in 1957", The Times of Viet-Nam (February 27, 1958), Vol.2, No.43, p.2.
- ^c La Depeche du Cambodge (July 9, 1958).
- ^d Robert L. Sansom, The Economics of Insurgency in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam, p.57, fn.8.
- ^e Republic of Viet-Nam, State Secretariat for Information, Bilan des realisations gouvernementales (Saigon, 1961), p.370.
- ^f Sansom, op.cit., p.57.
- ^g United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Government Operations, Land Reform in Vietnam, House Report No.1142, 90th Congress, 2d Session (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), p.7.

its main attention on domain lands, concessions and the towns, not rural property.¹¹⁷ Under Diem the Land Registry

¹¹⁷ Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.243.

Office was severely understaffed (and therefore fell behind in its work) and even non-existent in some provinces.¹¹⁸ In addition the land registers on which the Registry Office based its work were in many cases either inaccurate, wrong (due to interference by interested parties) or non-existent (destroyed during the war).¹¹⁹ Land titles were temporary until the new owners had completed purchase. To obtain land a prospective buyer had to have his farm plot surveyed and a new title issued. This process was protracted to put it mildly. By December 1960, for example, of 607,300 ha. acquired by the RVN only 376,600 ha. had been surveyed (three-fourths of which was being cultivated by 100,000 new owners).¹²⁰ Table 7-4 sets out the figures on the progress of land reform.

The crucial point about land redistribution undertaken under Ordinance 57 was that it was too narrowly conceived.¹²¹ Only 30% of the total cultivated rice land was liable to expropriation and of the number of tenants in 1955 only

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p.245-246.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p.243.

¹²⁰ Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., p.118.

¹²¹ Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., p.60 writes about the impact of the program in Long An: "What conclusions can be drawn about the government land reform program in Long An? The first and most striking is that the maximum impact of the program was limited, even on paper. Of some 78,000 hectares of rented riceland at the time the program began, only 7,370, or less than 10 percent, came under the expropriation provisions of Ordinance 57...Moreover, by 1960 when the government was already in serious trouble in Long An, only 973 temporary titles had been distributed, that is, less than 3 percent of an estimated 35,000 tenant families profited from the program in time for it to benefit the government". According to Sansom, The Economics of Insurgency, op.cit., p.58, "At most, 10 percent of the tenants [in the Mekong Delta as a whole] were affected".

10% ever benefited.¹²² As late as 1965 according to Sansom, some 817,000 tenants (87.5% of the total) had yet to benefit from the provisions of Ordinance 57.¹²³ In brief the vast majority of tenants in the Mekong Delta labored under the abusive tenancy conditions described earlier.

Two further points should be made. Firstly, French-owned land (229,150 ha.) was never redistributed. Under a scheme agreed to by the French government and the RVN,¹²⁴ the former paid French owners a form of compensation and turned the land over to the RVN. The RVN in turn sold the land to the highest bidders.¹²⁵ Among the beneficiaries were members of the President's family, in-laws and close friends (such as Tran Van Chuong and Nguyen Ngoc Tho).¹²⁶

¹²² Committee on Government Operations, Land Reform, op.cit., p.5 states "Of the 4.48 million acres [1.8 million ha.] of land acquired for land reform and available to the GVN since 1954, less than 15 percent was distributed to individuals and less than 10 percent was distributed for communal and public use between 1954 and 1962". Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., p.118 writes that 225,000 former tenants stood to benefit and another 750,000 would remain without land. Gittinger, "Agrarian Reform", op.cit., p.207 states that only 312,000 stood to benefit.

¹²³ Sansom, The Economics of Insurgency, op.cit., p.57.

¹²⁴ Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., p.117. Gittinger, "Agrarian Reform", op.cit., pp.207-208.

¹²⁵ Stanley Andrews, "Red Tape and Broken Promises", The Reporter (May 5, 1966) quoted in Bernard B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, op.cit., p.312.

¹²⁶ Shaplen, The Lost Rebellion, op.cit., p.145, "Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the land redistribution program was the manner in which influential politicians and members of Diem's family obtained huge amounts of land that had been taken over by the government from French or Vietnamese landlords but had not been distributed to the peasants". Among the beneficiaries: Nguyen Ngoc Tho, RVN Vice President, and Tran Van Chuong, Tran Thi Le Xuan's (Mme. Nhu's) father, described by Shaplen as "another of the successful 'land grabbers'". See also Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid, op.cit., p.126.

Secondly, communal land was not subject to Ordinance 57. In Central Viet-Nam communal land was especially important where 99% of the landowners were small holders.¹²⁷ One hundred thousand farmers operated farms less than 1 ha. in size. Theoretically the institution of communal land served to benefit the poor but in practice, as land was let to the highest bidder, only the well-to-do benefited.¹²⁸

This system has been described by Denis Warner:

In practice, the system usually works as yet another means for squeeze and graft by appointed village chiefs and one of the worst forms of land exploitation. No security of tenure is given beyond the crop year, and there is no incentive for crop or land improvement when the poor peasants are allowed on the land. More often than not they do not get a chance at all, and the land goes to the richest and most prominent landlord.¹²⁹

There were many other defects involved with the running of the RVN's land reform program. Private agreements were often struck between landlord and tenant which disregarded provisions of the various land reform ordinances.¹³⁰ Wealthy landowners escaped expropriation by placing legal ownership of excess land in the hands of close family members. Both the Land Registry Office and the Land

¹²⁷ Gittinger, "Rent Reduction and Tenure Security", op.cit., p.430-431; and Warner, The Last Confucian, op.cit., p.139.

¹²⁸ Ibid.; Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.244, writes, "in Annam such big landlords as there were constituted the communal property either of whole villages or of the chretientes. In the former, periodical reallocation was by auction, for rents bid up often to half the crop..."

¹²⁹ Warner, The Last Confucian, op.cit., p.139.

¹³⁰ Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.244-245 and Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., p.56-57. "Commentary: David Wurfel on Gittinger", op.cit., p.209; and Gittinger, "Agrarian Reform", op.cit., p.203.

Reform Office were run as separate departments, operating with inadequate facilities. Thus Diem's reorganization of provincial boundaries created the incredible situation where branches of one office existed in some provinces but not in others.¹³¹

The RVN's land reform of 1957-58 also struck at the heart of reforms implemented by the Party during the Resistance. According to Le Van Chan:

This land-reform program had a great impact in the countryside, making the majority of the peasantry angry at the government. The peasants felt that they had spilled their blood to drive the French from the country, while the landlords sided with the French and fought against the peasants. Thus at the very least the peasants' rights to the land should have been confirmed. Instead, they were forced to buy the land, and thus they felt they were being victimized by the Government. At the same time the Party apparatus took advantage of this situation to propagandize on how bad the Government was, how it was the government of the landlords, stealing the land from the peasants.¹³²

¹³¹ Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.245, "A special agency was set up to administer the reform, outside the Land Registry - an administrative error made worse by the fact that hasty creation of new provinces coupled with poor facilities in some of the older ones, meant that there might be a land registry but no land reform office in some provinces, or a land reform office but no land registry, or neither".

¹³² Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., p.97-98; Race also quotes a former province chief of Long An as stating, "It appears that this policy was not well received by the peasants, because under it they had to pay for the land as well as pay agricultural taxes to both the government and the Vietcong. But the communists had already confiscated most of this land and distributed it free, one-half to one hectare to each family". (p.17); Trager, Why Vietnam? op.cit., p.153-154, writes, "Particularly unhappy were the peasants who had squatted on the lands of absentee landlords during the war years, 1940-1954, when the owners were not in a position, because of the security situation, to collect rents; now, as the peasants obtained title to land which they had long been cultivating free of rent, land they already regarded as their own, they were being forced for the first time to make substantial annual payments". Shaplen,

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VI. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM
(1957-58)

A. Organizations Created by the Diem Regime

The main organizational strength of the Diem regime lay in a web of organizations - political and security - kept in tight control by an inner circle of the President's family and their close associates. At the center of all activity was the Can Lao Nhan Vi Cach Mang Dang (Revolutionary Personalist Workers' Party) run by Ngo Dinh Nhu, one of Diem's three brothers. The Can Lao Party was a covert organization which copied Communist organizational patterns, including a cell structure at the base.¹³³ Like the Communist Party it too operated through a variety of front groups: Phong Trao Cach Mang Quoc Gia (National Revolutionary Movement) and the Lien Doan Cong Chuc Cach Mang Quoc Gia (Revolutionary Civil Servants' League). Nhu's wife, Tran Thi Le Xuan, took charge of the Phong Trao Lien Doi Phu Nhu (Women's Solidarity Movement). Ngo Dinh Nhu also operated a variety of private intelligence and security organizations,¹³⁴

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The Lost Revolution, op.cit., p.145, "Probably the biggest fault of the land redistribution program was its failure to recognize the fact that the Vietcong [sic] had turned over land to the peasants for nothing in the areas they controlled; in view of this, the price the peasants had to pay to buy land from the government was undoubtedly too high".

¹³³ Interview with Tran Kim Tuyen, Saigon, 13 July 1972; Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.401-402 states that it was more similar to the French Surete.

¹³⁴ The Surete was reorganized into a Viet-Nam Bureau of Investigation which employed 2,500 agents (of a total number of 6,500 employees) in December 1958; Weekly Intelligence Digest 52-58 quoted in "US Training of the Vietnamese National Army", op.cit., Chronology, p.00. There were in addition municipal police forces and the Cong Dan Vu. Estimates of the number of services vary: Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.255 says 10 in 1962;

cont'd

the most prominent of which, the Service des Etudes Politiques, Economiques et Sociales (SEPES), was headed by Tran Kim Tuyen.

The origins of the Can Lao Party are obscure,¹³⁵ but it seems certain that by 1954 Nhu had divided up the task of Party-building with his brother Ngo Dinh Can and their close associate Tran Quoc Buu. Their initial organizing plan called for Can to work among the Catholic community, for Buu to build up influence in trade union circles and for Nhu to proselytize among the intellectuals. However after Diem's appointment as Premier by Bao Dai, Viet-Nam was effectively carved up between the two brothers. Can took firm control in the central provinces while Nhu and his wife exercised influence further south.¹³⁶

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David Halberstam, The Making of a Quagmire (New York: Random House, 1965), p.57 writes, "At one time there were thirteen different secret police organizations, controlled by different members of the Government". Voice of the Dai Viet National Liberation Troops in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 2300 GMT, September 10, 1955 provides a commentary on six of the major services.

¹³⁵ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.75 states that it was formed in the pre-1954 period; its charter may be found in John C. Donnell, "Politics in South Vietnam: Doctrines of Authority in Conflict", Ph.D. Thesis, The University of California at Berkeley, 1964, pp.555-577; most interesting is Lansdale's claim: "Ambassador Durbrow seemed genuinely surprised when I told him that the Can Lao Party in Vietnam was originally promoted by the U.S. State Department and was largely the brain-child of a highly respected, senior U.S. Foreign Service professional". See: "Memorandum for Secretary of Defense" (undated circa 1961) by Brig. Gen. Lansdale in "US Perceptions of the Insurgency, 1954-1960", in United States-Vietnam Relations, Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab 4, p.74. Geoffrey Warner, "Interview with Major-Gen. Edward G. Lansdale, Alexandria, Va., 25 June 1973", typescript, p.1 states "I asked Lansdale who the State Department man who created the Can Lao was, and he replied that it was Ambassador Reinhardt".

¹³⁶ Donnell, "Politics in South Vietnam", op.cit., p.224-237.

The size of the Can Lao Party, like its origins, is also a matter of some dispute. In August 1959 Nhu stated that Party rolls contained 20,000 names.¹³⁷ In May 1960 he released another estimate: 70,000 members on the Party's rolls of whom no more than 25,000 were active.¹³⁸ Nhu's estimates are undoubtedly exaggerated and although independent estimates have ranged from 5,000 to 50,000, Can Lao Party size probably never exceeded 16,000.¹³⁹

According to Robert Scigliano, however,

(i)n actuality the Personalist Labor Party consists of a small number of trusted persons, nearly all of whom are in the government. There they occupy key, though not necessarily the highest, positions in the Saigon bureaucracy, the army, and some provincial administrations.¹⁴⁰

The NRM was founded in October 1954 as a mass-based political organization. Its membership may have grown from 10,000 in 1955 to over 1 million by August 1959.¹⁴¹ During the 1954-60 period, although three separate persons have headed the NRM (Bui Kien Tin, Tran Chanh Thanh and Pham Van Nhu),¹⁴² "real power within this organization",

¹³⁷ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.76.

¹³⁸ The New York Times (May 22, 1960), p.4.

¹³⁹ Shaplen, The Lost Revolution, op.cit., p.130-131; the estimate of 16,000 may be found in: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Intelligence Report: The Outlook for North and South Vietnam, No.8008 (May 5, 1959), p.8. Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., p.158 indicates that the Can Lao Party was not intended to be a mass based group.

¹⁴⁰ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.76.

¹⁴¹ Donnell, "Politics in South Vietnam", op.cit., p.238-250.

¹⁴² Tran Chanh Thanh resigned and was replaced by Pham Van Nhu in 1957; "Movement for National Revolution End Congress, Begins Third Year", The Times of Viet Nam (June 8, 1957), Vol.2, No.22, p.1 and 15.

writes one observer, "is divided between Ngo Dinh Can, who runs the party in the central delta area of the country, and Ngo Dinh Nhu, who directs it, less strictly, in the South, with the central highlands area divided between them".¹⁴³

The same writer has also commented:

the backbone of the Movement is the government administration. Its national leaders are deputies and administrative officials; province chiefs have presided over its public meetings, district information chiefs, at least in some areas, have acted as district NRM chairmen, and the village political commissioners, usually act as local chapter chairmen.¹⁴⁴

The Revolutionary Civil Servants' League traces its origins to 1954-55 when a segment of the civil service, operating through the so-called Democratic Revolutionary Force (DRF), became politicized and threw its support behind Diem in his confrontation with the Binh Xuyen. Later in the year Nhu succeeded in winning over the DRF's leader, Nguyen Huu Khai. After a series of preparatory conferences, the Revolutionary Civil Servants' League was founded on Double Seven Day (July 7, 1955), the first anniversary of the Diem regime.¹⁴⁵

Mme. Nhu's Women's Solidarity Movement was created in May 1958 as an outgrowth of the League of Women Civil

¹⁴³ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.77.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. Its activities in Central Viet-Nam are described by a broadcast of the Free Voice of the Vietnamese People in Vietnamese to Vietnam, 1200 GMT, April 8, 1955.

¹⁴⁵ Charles A. Joiner and Roy Jumper, "Organizing Bureaucrats: South Viet Nam's National Revolutionary Civil Servants' League", Asian Survey (April 1963), Vol.III, No.4, p.205-206.

Servants. It claimed an exaggerated membership of 969,850 in 1960.¹⁴⁶

In addition to the above-mentioned regime-sponsored organizations, there also existed a number of intelligence services which in theory came under the direction of SEPES.¹⁴⁷ According to Dennis Duncanson, "in practice each [service] communicated direct with the President or his brother, in whose hands SEPES became the tool of the Can Lao rather than the other way round...All these services competed to show off their 'kills' to the Palace...".¹⁴⁸

These organizations and movements represented the scaffolding surrounding the inner core of the Diem government.¹⁴⁹ At the centre stood the President, Ngo Dinh Nhu, Tran Thi Le Xuan and Ngo Dinh Can. Central Vietnam was run as a separate fief by Can (although he held no formal government position), where the full resources of the NRM and Can Lao Party were used to keep watch over all

¹⁴⁶ Donnell, "Politics in South Vietnam", op.cit., p.276-285.

¹⁴⁷ Described by military officers who led the abortive November 1960 coup in their memorandum, excerpts of which are published in Burchett, The Furtive War, op.cit., p.93; See also the discussion in Nguyen Thai, Is South Vietnam Viable? (Manila: Carmelo and Bauermann, Inc., 1962), p.202-209.

¹⁴⁸ Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.255; Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.186-187.

¹⁴⁹ Halberstam, The Making of a Quagmire, op.cit., p.43-59; Duncanson, Government and Revolution in Vietnam, op.cit., p.218, Burchett, The Furtive War, op.cit., p.77-94.

opponents of the Republic, communist and non-Communist alike.¹⁵⁰

In Nam Bo, Nhu and a coterie of four-five close associates directed the maze of organizations through the instrumentality of the Can Lao Party. The personal relationship each adviser maintained with the Ngo family determined the amount of power and influence they could wield at any given moment. The family, however, was the real centre of power. As Scigliano has perceptively pointed out:

It seems impossible, moreover, that Diem could dispense with the services of his family, for, given the way in which he governs Vietnam, his family is indispensable to him. Together the Ngos constitute a balanced system, no important part of which may be removed without wrecking its operation. And thus is Vietnam governed, by paternalism and nepotism, and with a growing gulf between the very few rulers and the very many ruled.¹⁵¹

It is significant that the political "activities" undertaken by Diem, Nhu and Can in this period would lead

¹⁵⁰ In March-April 1958 Can and Nhu reached an agreement by which Can's agents in the centre could operate in Saigon (the number rose from 25 to over 200), Working Paper, Appendices, Item 28, p.6; Can and Nhu differed on the role of the Viet-Nam Socialist Party, it was permitted to operate in Nam Bo but not in central Viet-Nam; see Donnell, "Politics in South Viet Nam", op.cit., p.440. Perhaps more revealing is the account by Bernard Fall, The Two Viet-Nam's, op.cit., p.272, "In 1958, four translators of French nationality disappeared one night from Saigon; although working for the French Embassy, they were not covered by diplomatic immunity. Inquiries to police authorities proved fruitless; the latter, genuinely puzzled, explained that they were not involved in the case. It turned out that the translators had been arrested by a Central Vietnamese strong-arm group run by Ngo Dinh Can that had specially 'raided' Saigon for that purpose".

¹⁵¹ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.61-62; Scigliano mentions Diem's reaction to an attempt by an American Ambassador to criticize Nhu.

the U.S. Ambassador in September 1960 to recommend, inter alia, that Tran Kim Tuyen ("Nhu's henchman") should be posted abroad "because of his growing identification in public mind with alleged secret police methods of repression and control".¹⁵² Concerning the Can Lao Party, Ambassador Durbrow suggested the following:

Make public announcement of disbandment of Can Lao party or at least its surfacing, with names and positions of all members made known publicly. Purpose this step would be to eliminate atmosphere of fear and suspicion and reduce public belief in favoritism and corruption, all of which party's semi-covert status has given rise to.¹⁵³

B. Non-Communist Opposition

During 1954-55 the Diem regime had done its best to suppress non-Communist opposition to which it attached the pejorative labels "colonialist" (pro-French) or "feudalist" (pro-Bao Dai). Central Viet-Nam had long been the home for a variety of anti-Communist and anti-Diemist groupings.¹⁵⁴ Chapter two provided details of their early challenges to the Diem regime. As late as 1956 one faction of the Viet-Nam Quoc Dan Dang (VNQDD) was still able to continue its dissidence in Quang Nam and Quang Ngai

¹⁵² Telegram from Ambassador E. Durbrow in Saigon to the U.S. Secretary of State in Washington (Saigon 624) (September 16, 1960) reproduced in United States-Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 10, p.1313.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p.1314.

¹⁵⁴ See the discussion in R.J. O'Neill, "Regional Influences on Vietnamese Political Parties", Politics (May 1969), Vol.IV, No.1, p.1-19. Robert G. Scigliano, "Political Parties in South Vietnam under the Republic", Pacific Affairs, (December 1960), Vol.XXXIII, No.4, pp.327-346; and Scigliano, "The Electoral Process in South Vietnam: Politics in an Underdeveloped State", Midwest Journal of Political Science (May 1960), Vol.IV, No.2, pp.138-161.

provinces.¹⁵⁵ That same year, according to Joseph Buttinger, the RVN succeeded in suppressing at least three other groups: Dang Dai Viet Quoc Xa, Dang Dai Viet Duy Dan and the Dai Viet Quoc Dan Dang.¹⁵⁶

One expedient employed by the Can Lao Party and the NRM was the wholesale dismissal from the civil service or armed forces of anyone suspected of being an opponent of the regime.¹⁵⁷ One writer has even gone so far as to suggest that Ngo Dinh Can paid more attention to rounding up anti-Diemist nationalists than members of the Communist underground.¹⁵⁸ Elsewhere the RVN preferred to take over and control trade union and other political groups which it had not originally formed. Some, like Nguyen Thanh Trac's wing of the Viet-Nam Phuc Quoc Hoi, were disbanded.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Donnell, "Politics in South Vietnam", op.cit., p.436-438.

¹⁵⁶ Buttinger, A Dragon Embattled, Vol.2, op.cit., p.1246; trials of members of the Dai Viet Quoc Dan Dang in April 1957 were reported by Vietnam News Agency, in English, 1118 GMT, April 11, 1957. A member of the Dai Viet carrying weapons into Saigon was arrested in October 1958, "Skipper Arrested for Hiding Weapons", The Times of Viet-Nam (October 20, 1958), Vol.2, No.232, p.1 and 2; "Skipper Accused of Taking Orders from the Dai Viet", *ibid.* (October 22, 1958), Vol.2, No.234, p.1.

¹⁵⁷ These incidents were reported in Quang Ngai and Binh Dinh provinces by Vietnam News Agency, in English *morse* to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, December 12, 1956. Dismissals reportedly continued during 1958, Nhan Dan (October 10, 1958) as carried by Vietnam News Agency (October 10, 1958).

¹⁵⁸ Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.256, "it was whispered that Can excluded Nhu's agents from his territory and even turned the tables by infiltrating his own spies into high places in Saigon. For all the intelligence services it is a valid criticism that the Vietcong were generally a secondary target, priority being given to surveillance of other enemies of the regime or of one another..."

¹⁵⁹ Donnell, "Politics in South Vietnam", op.cit., p.422-423; see also Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 1200 GMT, December 6, 1956. Another faction led by Nguyen Thanh Dang existed in Ninh Thuan province as late as March 1956.

Others were used as front's for Nhu's influence and compliant officials were often rewarded with seats in the rump National Assembly.¹⁶⁰

The case of Phan Quang Dan, one of the most prominent opponents of the Diem regime, is illustrative.¹⁶¹ In May 1957 Dan united various personalities representing the Viet Nam Phuc Quoc Hoi, the Socialist Party and the Republican Party into an opposition Democratic Bloc. Through the bloc's organ, Thoi Luan, they began to press for the abolishment of "concentration camps" (as political re-education centres were termed by the RVN) and for a variety of democratic liberties (freedom of the press, association, etc.). In September a government sponsored mob ransacked the editorial offices of the paper, pouring acid on the presses. The following month Thoi Luan's editor, Nghiem Xuan Thien, was taken to court on charges of violating Decree No.13 (20 February 1956) which made it illegal to publish news detrimental to the national interest. In March 1958 Thoi Luan apparently went too far and was permanently closed.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.60-61 and 76. The Nhu-Can rivalry even extended to the National Assembly where both brothers sponsored deputies in opposition to each other.

¹⁶¹ The details of Phan Quang Dan are taken from: *ibid.*, p.85-87 and 175-176; Warner, The Last Confucian, op.cit., chapter six, "The Case of Dr Dan", p.107-124, especially p.112-114.

¹⁶² The closure of Thoi Luan was typical of press censorship at that time. In March 1957 the newspaper Dan Chu was first seized and then suspended for reporting details of an assassination attempt against President Diem. The weekly Duong Song suffered the same fate for reporting Dan Chu's account (March 5, 1957). In September of that year mobs attacked the press offices not only of Thoi Luan but of other papers which irritated the government: Tan Dan, Tu Do and Doc Lap. In June 1958 Cong Nhan was forced to close for reporting landlord evasions of the land reform ordinances.

The object of the government's ire was an anonymously written column entitled "Letter to My Deputy" which, according to Robert Scigliano, "was a long blistering attack on the constitutional foundations, policies and leadership of the regime, said to be distinguished from Communist and Fascist rule only by the absence of ideology and organization".¹⁶³ According to a story in The Times of Viet-Nam, Thoi Luan's references to rural insecurity and the alleged formation of a "Committee to Liberate the South" headquartered in Saigon-Cholon, were additional reasons why the government chose to cancel the paper's permit to publish.¹⁶⁴ The Democratic Bloc finally collapsed the following year when Phan Quang Dan withdrew his membership.

In June 1957 several anti-Communist and anti-Diem nationalist factions came together in Paris and formed a group which called itself the National Salvation Movement (NSM). Within three months, no doubt operating through Cambodia, the NSM managed to install a radio transmitter inside South Viet-Nam which broadcast anti-regime propaganda.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.176.

¹⁶⁴ "Editor Nghiem Xuan Thien sentenced to 10 Months' Imprisonment With Reprieve and 100 Thousand piastres of Fines", The Times of Viet-Nam (March 14, 1958), Vol.2, No.56, p.1.

¹⁶⁵ Kahin and Lewis, The United States in Vietnam, op.cit., p.110; see Voice of the National Salvation Movement, in English 0500 GMT, in French 0530 GMT, October 18, 1957 in British Broadcasting Corporation, Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 5, (October 24, 1957), No.710, p.40, which also contains editorial comment on the station by BBC monitors.

The content of these broadcasts is interesting for they provide an alternate insight into political developments at this time. This transmitter, the Voice of the National Salvation Movement, was alive to the growth of Communist influence in the rural areas and also to Diem's policies against the sects which left them with little choice but to remain in opposition. According to a broadcast made in October 1957:

It is precisely this political dictatorship and the corrupt and unjust regime which have driven the people of South Viet-Nam into the arms of the Communists and which could facilitate their forcible seizure of South Viet Nam. In the light of the policy followed by Diem and his brothers since 1954...one can assert without fear of being contradicted, that Diem's anti-communism is only a political plan aimed at obtaining foreign aid. Inside the country he has busied himself only with exterminating nationalist elements, and to this end he has even agreed to collaborate with notorious former Viet Minh cadres.¹⁶⁶

Although information on the National Salvation Movement is scanty (transcripts of its radio broadcasts exist for the months of October and November 1957 only) it seems that elements of the Dai Viet Party were behind it.¹⁶⁷ The Dai Viets were an extremely anti-Communist group who maintained that Diem's suppression of the sects and other nationalist groups (like the VNQDD) only served to strengthen the hand of the Communists. Apparently the NSM hoped to win U.S. support (or at least to deny it to the Diem regime) on the issue of anti-Communism.

¹⁶⁶ Voice of the National Salvation Movement, 0001 GMT, October 25, 1957.

¹⁶⁷ BBC, Summary of World Broadcasts Part 5, (November 5, 1957), No.713, p.54 which concludes editorially, "The content and format of the programmes appear to be identical with those of the Dai Viet Radio which broadcast on the same frequency up to August 1956".

Thus the NSM tried to play on the fact that ex-Viet Minh cadres (supposedly Communist) were embraced by the Diem regime.¹⁶⁸

Propaganda broadcasts of the Voice of the National Salvation Movement attempted to present two themes: (1) Diem's anti-Communism was a sham and (2) that U.S. support for Diem, predicated on the principles of anti-Communism, was misguided and would eventually prove counter-productive. On November 11th the NSM transmitter broadcast the following:

Diem has launched a noisy anti-Communist movement in order to fool the Americans and collect more aid from the USA. Everywhere Diem has organized ceremonies for the submission of the Communist elements, in order to make the Americans believe that he had succeeded in reforming Communists. True, in some places some backsliding Communist members had surrendered to the national authorities. But most of the people who shouted slogans against the Communists and who praised Diem, were Diem's own men who were disguised as Communist elements to fool American guests. If someone added up the number of people who Diem called surrendered communists, it would be found that the total figure exceeded the number of members of the Communist Party of Ho Chi Minh. Moreover, the Communists had realised that Diem needed surrendered Communists to fool the Americans, and had sent their own men to pretend to surrender to the national authorities in order to infiltrate into the various organizations of Diem's, especially in the villages.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Tran Chanh Thanh and Tran Kim Tuyen, for example, were both ex-members of the Viet Minh Front; so were several other members of the Diem regime.

¹⁶⁹ Voice of the National Salvation Movement, 2330 GMT, November 8, 1957. Both points were true. Many of the "mass conversions" of Communist cadres were indeed stage managed. On the other hand the Party attempted to infiltrate Diemist organizations. According to Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.25, "One of our greatest errors was to try to have a number of Party members in certain provinces of Central Viet Nam feign surrender to the enemy".

Concerning U.S. support for Diem, the Voice of the National Salvation Movement stated the following on October 18th:

Continued US support of Diem's policy would result in the alienation of the entire population of South Vietnam. As for US aid, the granting of these funds to one individual, who diverted them to the advancement of his own family, meant that this aid could not reach the people. If the US policy was not modified, it would raise the Vietnamese people against the anti-nationalist policies of Diem, and by extension, against the USA. Such an event could not help but play into the hands of the Communists. The anti-Communist fight in South Vietnam would be lost...¹⁷⁰

Meanwhile RVN policy in the Highlands sparked off resistance of its own. As a result of Diem's attempts to resettle ethnic Vietnamese on land in the Highland provinces, the local inhabitants were dispossessed from their traditional property. Presidential decrees in 1958 had the effect of denying recognition to montagnard landholdings.¹⁷¹ These acts, coupled with Vietnamese ignorance of Highland customs, caused racial tension to rise. Sometime in early 1958 various Highland leaders came together and formed the Bajaraka Movement, an acronym formed from the names of the four tribes involved: Bahnar, Jarai, Rhade and Koho.¹⁷² In May a provisional committee drew up a "Special Charter" outlining Highland grievances and demands for political autonomy. This document was

¹⁷⁰ Voice of the National Salvation Movement in English, 0500 GMT, October 18, 1957.

¹⁷¹ Committee on Government Operations, Land Reform, op.cit., p.91 and Gerald C. Hickey, The Highland People of South Vietnam, op.cit., p.33 and 81.

¹⁷² Ibid., p.29.

forwarded to Diem in September at which time the Bajaraka leaders called a general strike to draw attention to their claims. They succeeded for within six days of their strike RVN security police arrested all seven of the movement's leaders.¹⁷³ The significance of this is that the montagnards involved were generally assumed to be anti-Communist.¹⁷⁴

VII. INCREASING AMERICAN MILITARY AND ECONOMIC INFLUENCE

In the 1955-61 period the United States lavished nearly two billion dollars in economic aid upon the Republic of Viet-Nam.¹⁷⁵ By May 1958 Saigon housed the largest U.S. economic aid mission in the world and within three years (1961) was the third ranking non-NATO recipient of American aid (after Korea and Taiwan).¹⁷⁶ Table 7-5 sets out the figures on American military and economic aid to South Viet-Nam in the 1955-60 period.

The major mechanism used in the disbursement of aid (except for direct military grants which comprised 25% of the total program)¹⁷⁷ was the commercial import program (CIP). Under the CIP the United States subsidized the running costs of the RVN in this way:

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ At least four of the seven became senior RVN officials after the overthrow of Diem in November 1963.

¹⁷⁵ Actually \$1.701 billion for the period July 1954 - June 1962, Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.111-112.

¹⁷⁶ "U.S. Perceptions of the Insurgency", op.cit., p.37.

¹⁷⁷ Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid, op.cit., p.85-93.

TABLE 7-5

U.S. AID TO THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM (1955-60)

(in millions of U.S. dollars by fiscal year)

<u>Obligations*</u>	<u>FY1955</u>	<u>FY1956</u>	<u>FY1957</u>	<u>FY1958</u>	<u>FY1959</u>	<u>FY1960</u>
Economic**	322.4	210.0	282.2	189.1	207.4	182.0
Military	-	167.3	110.5	53.2	41.9	70.9
TOTAL	322.4	377.3	392.7	242.3	249.3	252.9

* Not expenditures

** Grants and Loans

SOURCE: John D. Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid: American Experience in Southeast Asia (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), p.284.

The two Governments agreed first on the size of the allocation of dollars [of U.S. aid for a given fiscal year]. Vietnamese importers - preferably industrial investors - applied for licenses to import from the U.S., or, in a variety of circumstances arising out of Washington's own balance-of-payments position, from a list of third countries that might change from year to year, the commodities they required, depositing at the National Bank in Saigon at thirty-five piastres for every dollar on the pro forma invoice. The US Treasury reimbursed the supplier in dollars, while the RVN government encashed the deposited piastres, crediting them to what was known as the Counterpart Fund, and incurred on the other side of the account such expenditures as had been agreed with the US - in the main, the pay and food of the armed forces.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.284; Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.112 and Fall, "Will South Vietnam Be Next?", The Nation (May 31, 1958), Vol.186, pp.489-493. An example of a third country is given in Fall, "South Viet-Nam's Internal Problems", op.cit., p.245, fn.10, "France received agricultural products from the United States and repaid by allowing South Viet-Nam to purchase goods in France to the amount owed the United States by France".

Without the CIP or some other aid mechanism, the Diem regime would not have been able to survive as it had no other source of revenues sufficient to cover the expenses of running the country.¹⁷⁹ The solution to this problem, as we shall note below, was thought to rest on encouraging Viet-Nam's economic self-sufficiency.¹⁸⁰ Neither the CIP nor the RVN's efforts at economic development were ultimately successful.¹⁸¹

There were several problems associated with the running of the CIP. Initially the program encouraged the importation mainly of consumer goods (air conditioners, water skis, hi-fis, automobiles).¹⁸² These made little

¹⁷⁹ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.111. The United States provided \$93 million worth of assistance which was absolutely vital in the transport and resettlement of regroupees to the South in 1954-55. American aid also filled the breach left by the departure of the French Expeditionary Corps whose expenditure had a greater impact on the local economy than American spending; *ibid.*, p.103 and Fall, "South Viet-Nam's Internal Problems", op.cit., p.244.

¹⁸⁰ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.106.

¹⁸¹ Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.277-282 provides an extended discussion. See also: Edward R. Wright, Barriers to Progress in South Vietnam: The United States Experience (Seoul: Pomso Publishers, 1973).

¹⁸² Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.103; Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.286, writes "American planners had anticipated that 40 percent of the CIP money would be devoted to capital equipment, while 60 percent bought raw materials and consumer goods to generate piastres for the armed forces. In the event, aid administrators had to be content when even 16 percent was reserved for capital equipment...". Robert Scheer, How the United States Got Involved in Vietnam, op.cit., p.52 has written, "On the basis of available evidence, provided by the Michigan State economists and other experts, it is apparent that at least three-fourths of American aid was used for the importation of either consumer goods or raw materials for the production of consumer goods". Fall, "South Viet-Nam's Internal Problems", op.cit., p.246, "Or should the flow of merchandise continue - as it does -

cont'd

contribution to economic development projects and tended to benefit mainly the urban middle and upper classes.¹⁸³ Secondly, the piastre-dollar exchange rate was artificially low¹⁸⁴ and licensed importers, after paying customs duties, could often sell goods at a lower price than their overseas value.¹⁸⁵ One result was a massive stockpiling of goods in Saigon which could not be sold.¹⁸⁶ The RVN-imposed duties on the in-flow of goods under the CIP, in fact, soon became the government's prime source of revenue.¹⁸⁷

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without stop, then the goods would simply pile up, unsold, in the shops and warehouses. This is precisely what has happened in South Viet-Nam since the spring 1957, bringing about not only a crisis in the very concept of counterpart financing, but an even graver crisis in the Vietnamese economy itself". See also: Milton C. Taylor, "South Viet-Nam: Lavish Aid, Limited Progress", Pacific Affairs (1961), Vol.XXXIV, No.3, p.242-256.

183 Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.126: "the greatest beneficiaries have been the urban dwellers, especially the small middle and upper classes. Thus, American aid has functioned to accentuate the distinction between the well-off and the masses. It has also led the Vietnamese government to depend on a foreign power instead of its people for its own support".

184 Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.284 states that the free rate of exchange 67\$ to one U.S. dollar, the unofficial rate was 100\$ to one U.S. dollar.

185 Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.103 and 116.

186 Fall, "Will South Viet Nam Be Next?" op.cit., p.490: "The market is saturated with consumer goods of all kinds which the Vietnamese are no longer able to buy. Merchandise is left to rot on the docks by importers who haven't the money to pay for it...On January 30, 1958, Viet-Nam had a stock of typewriters sufficient to cover its needs for five years and a stock of calculating machines (including 450 electric calculators) sufficient to cover its needs for eight years...In the field of textiles...(s)tocks on hand are sufficient to give about two suits of clothes to every Vietnamese man, woman and child, not counting an additional 23 million yards of cloth which were due to arrive by the end of March, 1958".

187 Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.116.

According to one observer, "American aid has paid for most of Vietnam's imports since 1954. It has provided most of the revenues for the Vietnamese budget - about 60 percent of all government revenues since 1954 have come directly or indirectly from American aid".¹⁸⁸

The U.S. used the CIP as the device through which it channelled over 80% of its economic aid.¹⁸⁹ In operation the money generated through the CIP did little to encourage RVN self-sufficiency. As table 7-6 sets out, 82% of the counterpart funds were used by the RVN to meet defence needs.

TABLE 7-6

U.S. COUNTERPART FUNDING FOR THE RVN (1955-60)

	<u>1955</u>	<u>1956</u>	<u>1957</u>	<u>1958</u>	<u>1959</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>Total</u>
Local currency deposits:	167.1	239.4	256.0	203.4	170.2	181.8	1218.4
Withdrawals in support of RVN defence budget:	97.1	202.5	204.5	152.9	176.0	166.6	999.6
Percentage of Total:	58%	85%	80%	75%	103%	92%	82%

SOURCE: "U.S. Perceptions of the Insurgency, 1954-1960", United States-Vietnam Relations 1945-1967, Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab 4, p.39.
All figures in millions of piastres.

Robert Scigliano has summarized the relevant figures as follows:

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p.111.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p.112 and 125.

Between 1956 and 1960, 43 per cent of all Vietnamese public expenditures were allocated directly to the military for the support of the army and Self-Defense Corps. The United States provided practically all of the money through the counterpart [fund] generated by the commercial import program. As a matter of fact, 78 per cent of all American aid given to Vietnam between these two years went into the military budget. In short, from 1956 to 1960 the Vietnamese government spent two-fifths of its total revenues, including over three-quarters of the money it obtained from the United States, in order to maintain its military establishment.¹⁹⁰

Table 7-7 sets out the disbursement for the remaining 20% of the total U.S. aid to Viet-Nam. A closer look at these expenditures reveals additional amounts spent on security and defence needs. The heading "transportation", for example, includes funds spent on the repair or construction of roads.¹⁹¹ Although certain economic benefits accrued from this, military needs determined the priorities. Ngo Dinh Diem's request for funds to construct a Saigon to Hue coastal highway was rejected. Instead the American government only agreed to build a highway as far as Bien Hoa, 20 miles on the outskirts of Saigon.¹⁹² This highway

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p.113; and Kahin and Lewis, The United States in Vietnam, op.cit., p.77 write, "the massive U.S. program of economic aid that in effect paid almost all government salaries as well as Diem's other operating expenses - a total of \$320 million allocated for fiscal year 1955 alone and almost \$2 billion during the fiscal years 1955 to 1960".

¹⁹¹ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.105.

¹⁹² The PAVN High Command alleged that the highway was in fact a "modern jet air field" (!) and, alternately, part of a strategic highway system; see: Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0510 GMT, April 26, 1958 which cites a letter by Col. Ha Van Lau of April 21, 1958 to the ICC and dispatch from Hong Kong, quoting DRVN sources, in The New York Times (April 26, 1958), p.10. American efforts to repair and construct roads were continually condemned by Communist sources for their obvious military uses.

cost more money than the total American contribution to labor, community development, social welfare, housing, health and education projects for the entire 1954-61 period.¹⁹³ Priority was also given to the construction

TABLE 7-7

U.S. ECONOMIC PROJECT AID TO THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM
(1955-1961)

<u>Area of Expenditure</u>	<u>Amount*</u>	<u>% of total</u>
Transportation	75,921	40.7
Public Administration and Safety	26,437	14.2
Food and Agriculture	16,662	8.9
Health and Sanitation	16,086	8.6
Industry and Mining	15,520	8.3
Technical Support	12,260	6.6
Education	9,296	5.0
Community Development, Social Welfare and Housing	8,641	4.6
General and Miscellaneous	6,045	3.2

* In thousands of dollars

SOURCE: Compiled from John D. Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid, op.cit., p.289, Table 4.

of a road into Pleiku province as a result of representations made by General Williams, the head of the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group. The heading "public administration" similarly contained expenditures related to the police and security services, equipment mainly.

The above figures do not reveal, however, the total sum. We have already mentioned that 25% of the total American aid package comprised direct military grants (Table 7-6 above). These averaged US\$85 million per year

¹⁹³ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.115.

during 1955-61. Not included in RVN expenditure are accounts related to the technically "civilian" Civil Guard, police and security services. And further, as Robert Scigliano has written, "(n)or do the figures on military and civilian expenditures indicate the extent to which provincial and other local authorities are likewise preoccupied with security matters".¹⁹⁴

The RVN's progress in economic development must be related to the security and defence priorities just outlined. In 1957 under American pressure the RVN moved slowly to implement a program of economic development.¹⁹⁵ A five year development program was drawn up but it was inexplicably kept secret.¹⁹⁶ Efforts inaugurated in March of that year to attract foreign investment were disappointingly unsuccessful.¹⁹⁷

In order to attain self-sufficiency the new development plan placed emphasis on the export of rice and rubber which accounted for 70% of export earnings.¹⁹⁸ Rice production quickly reached pre-war levels (3.4 million tons in 1938)

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p.114.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p.103 and Fall, The Two Viet-Nam's, op.cit., p.289-315.

¹⁹⁶ Vu Quoc Thuc, "National Planning in Vietnam", Asian Survey (September 1961), Vol.I, No.7, p.4.

¹⁹⁷ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.178; Fall, "South Viet-Nam's Internal Problems", op.cit., p.248-249; Scheer, How The United States Got Involved in Vietnam, op.cit., p.53 observes, "The rate of investment was far below that required to keep up with the 3 per cent annual growth in population".

¹⁹⁸ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.108.

and a high point of 5 million tons was attained in 1959. Exports rose from 70,000 tons to 340,000 in the same period. In 1961, however, due to rural insecurity the Republic of Viet-Nam stopped exporting surplus rice.¹⁹⁹ Rubber production similarly increased from a pre-war level of 60,000 tons in 1938 (51,000 tons in 1954) to 79,000 tons in 1960. Yet these developments were more than off-set by imports. While exports increased during the 1954-60 period, and while the total value of imports was reduced slightly at the same time (by \$26.7 million), the ratio between exports to imports stood at 1:3 in the best year.²⁰⁰

Other problems beset economic planners. Because of the proclivities of Diem and Nhu, the massive amounts of foreign exchange accumulated by the CIP were not reinvested in productive enterprises until after 1961.²⁰¹ Secondly, because of the comfortable arrangement provided by the CIP the RVN took no steps to raise the domestic revenues, preferring dependence on overseas aid.²⁰² Taxation revenues fell drastically perhaps by as much as 50%.²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p.108 and 117 and Fall, "Will South Viet-Nam Be Next?" op.cit.

²⁰⁰ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.116 and 125; Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, op.cit., p.294-296.

²⁰¹ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.120; Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.286; and Scheer, How the United States Got Involved in Vietnam, op.cit., p.51.

²⁰² Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.116; and Duncanson, Government and Revolution, op.cit., p.285.

²⁰³ Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.117.

Thirdly, the RVN was extremely slow to encourage the development of domestic industry whose growth would lessen dependence on foreign imported goods. Although an Industrial Development Center was established in 1957 to aid new enterprises, by 1959 it had approved only 27 of 125 projects submitted to it.²⁰⁴

The increase in American military and economic aid to the RVN did not go unnoticed in Hanoi. Throughout this period Party leaders kept a close watch on the growing American presence and the comings and goings of high-level American delegations (see Table 7-8). Of particular concern was the growth in the strength of American military advisers and the uncontrolled shipment into Viet-Nam of military supplies and equipment. Although both developments formed the subject of numerous complaints to the ICC, no definitive action was undertaken due to the refusal of the RVN to let ICC teams intrude where their presence might prove embarrassing.

During 1956 various pressures built up on the United States to increase the numbers of its military advisers in Viet-Nam in excess of the ceiling set by the 1954 Geneva Agreements. The solution was the creation of TERM - Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission - a subterfuge²⁰⁵ which

²⁰⁴ Frank C. Child, Essays on Economic Growth, Capital Formation, and Public Policy in Vietnam (Saigon: Michigan State University Vietnam Advisory Group, May 1961), p.133-134.

²⁰⁵ On early pressures see the letter from Robert D. Murphy, Deputy Under Secretary of State of May 1, 1956 to the Secretary of Defense, Charles E. Wilson reproduced in United States-Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 10, V.B.3., p.1057-1059; in responding to a request by Senator Mike Mansfield for information on MAAG, Lt. Gen. Williams, chief of MAAG in Viet-Nam, cabled the Office of the Secretary of

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TABLE 7-8

HIGH-LEVEL AMERICAN DELEGATIONS TO VIET-NAM (1957-58)

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Name:</u>	<u>Position:</u>
18-22 Jan. 1957	Gen. L. Lemnitzer	Commander in Chief U.S. Forces in the Far East and of UN Forces in Korea
10 Feb. 1957	Lt. Gen. Hudnell	USAF Chief of Materials (Pacific)
29-31 Mar. 1957	Gen. M.D. Taylor	US Army Chief of Staff
14-15 May 1957	C.C. Finucane	US Army Undersecretary
22 Jul. 1957	Vice Adm. Anderson	USN Chief of Staff (Pacific)
16 Sept. 1957	Adm. F.B. Stump	Commander, US Forces (Pacific)
29-31 Oct. 1957	M.D. Sprague	Assistant Secretary of Defense, International Security Affairs
	F.S. Bryant	Assistant Secretary of Defense for Properties and Installations
	G. Norton	Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air
17-18 Nov. 1957	Rep. Porter Harvey and a party of five	Member, US House Government Operations Subcommittee
15 Jan. 1958	I.D. White	Commander, US Army (Pacific)
	R.L. Wittrup	Deputy Chief of Staff, Plans and Operations
4 Jan. 1958	Cardinal Richard Spellman	Archbishop of New York

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Defense/International Security Affairs on May 20, 1960 a copy of his reply. Within the text of the cable the following appears: "Following sentence classified CONFIDENTIAL: Change over of TERM excess to MAAG ends subterfuge as actually TERM has had undercover mission as logistical advisors since activation". A copy of this cable is reproduced in *ibid.*, Book 10, V.B.3., p.1279-1980.

TABLE 7-8 cont'd

HIGH-LEVEL AMERICAN DELEGATIONS TO VIET-NAM (1957-58)

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Name:</u>	<u>Position:</u>
23-25 May 1958	John Friryn	US Assistant Secretary for Defense
5-7 May 1958	Gen. E.H.J. Carns	Assistant Commander, US Forces (Pacific)
15 May 1958	J.H. Douglas L. Thompson Gen. L.S. Kutor	USAF Secretary Director, Military Aid Program (Aviation)
19 May - 17 Jun 1958	Gen. M. O'Daniel (ret.)	Chairman, American Friends of Viet-Nam
15 Jul. 1958	F. Higgins	US Assistant Secretary of the Army
4 Sept. 1958	W.M. Bruckner	US Secretary of the Army
16 Sept. 1958	O.E. Passman	Chairman, Subcommittee, Foreign Operations Committee, US House of Representatives
19 Sept. 1958	Adm. H.D. Felt	Commander US Forces (Pacific)
21 Oct. 1958	Neil McElroy	US Secretary of Defense
23-27 Oct. 1958	G.P. Miller	Member, Armed Forces Committee, US House of Representatives
29 Oct. 1958	Gen. M.D. Taylor	US Army Chief of Staff
14 Nov. 1958	C.H. Shuff H.J. Kuss, Jr. Brig. Gen. W.H. Wright Maj. Gen. D.R. Hutchinson	Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Military Assistance Program Chief, Overseas Resources Division, Office of Programming and Control Chief of Mutual Security Division

enabled MAAG to surmount the Geneva limitations. It was now claimed by American officials that TERM was a temporary mission which would operate in Viet-Nam for the sole

purpose of recovering U.S. equipment originally given to France. TERM was activated in June and reached maximum strength (350 men) three months later. It soon attracted the attention of the ICC.²⁰⁶ After months of procrastination and evasion the RVN agreed to provide monthly reports to the International Commission. In its ninth interim report (March 10, 1959) the Commission was moved to state:

The Commission considered all relevant reports and documents connected with TERM and informed the Government of the Republic that the Commission was of the view that TERM should be able to complete its remaining work by the end of June 1959, and that, the status of TERM being temporary, TERM should cease to exist thereafter and its personnel should leave the Republic of Vietnam.²⁰⁷

Nearly a year later the issue had not been settled as the RVN informed the ICC that the discovery of further U.S. equipment made it impossible to determine when TERM would complete its activities. Under ICC prodding the RVN eventually replied that TERM would be able to complete its work by the end of 1960. When the deadline was reached the RVN informed the Commission that it "had ceased its activities and was disbanded on 31st December, 1960".²⁰⁸ PAVN protested that TERM had not disbanded but

²⁰⁶ Sixth Interim Report of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam, December 11, 1955 to July 31, 1956 Vietnam No.2 (1957), Command Paper (mnd. 31, (London: H.M.S.O., January 1957), paragraph 63, p.23-24.

²⁰⁷ Ninth Interim Report of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam, May 1, 1958 to January 31, 1959 Vietnam No.1, (1959) Cmnd. 726, (London: H.M.S.O., May 1959), paragraph 31, p.13.

²⁰⁸ Eleventh Interim Report of the International Commission for Supervision and Control, February 1, 1960 to February 28, 1961 Vietnam No.1, (1961) Command Paper Cmnd. 1551, (London: H.M.S.O., November 1961, paragraph 49, p.17.

had remained in Viet-Nam under the cover of MAAG's Logistics Section. There may have been some truth in this as 89 ex-TERM personnel transferred to MAAG's roster at that time.²⁰⁹

PAVN High Command made further protests to the ICC concerning the nature of MAAG, the role of CATO (Combat Arms Training Organization) and TRIM (Training Relations and Instruction Mission), and the participation of RVN observers in various SEATO meetings.²¹⁰ In May 1957, for example, the DRVN Ministry of Foreign Affairs charged that the U.S. had over 2,000 military personnel in South Viet-Nam.²¹¹ American denials put the total at 692 and further stated that one-half of them were on "temporary assignment".

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ The PAVN High Command protested the participation by military units from countries which were also members of SEATO in the October 26, 1956 RVN Independence Day celebrations in Saigon; Seventh Interim Report, Cmnd. 335, op.cit., p.15; the PAVN High Command also protested at the participation in SEATO conferences by RVN observers (such as the March 1958 meeting in Manila). The RVN denied such participation. See: Eighth Interim Report of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam, May 1, 1957 to April 30, 1958, Vietnam No.1 (1958) Command Paper Cmnd. 509, (London: H.M.S.O., August 1958), p.11. For further complaints see: Tenth Interim Report of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam, February 1, 1959 to January 31, 1960, Vietnam No.1, (1960), Command Paper Cmnd. 1040, (London: H.M.S.O., June 1960), p.18-19; Sixth Interim Report, op.cit., p.23-28; Ninth Interim Report, op.cit., p.11-16 and Eleventh Interim Report, op.cit., p.14-24. President Diem went on public record stating that the RVN could not join SEATO because this would be a violation of the 1954 Geneva Agreements and because it would be playing into the hands of the Communists; see: United Press of March 15, 1957 as quoted in Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 1200 GMT, March 20, 1957; and Reuters dispatch from Manila in The New York Times (March 23, 1958), p.41.

²¹¹ Dispatch from Washington in The New York Times (May 16, 1957), p.11; Associated Press dispatch from Hong Kong quoting Radio Hanoi in The New York Times (May 16, 1957), p.11.

TABLE 7-9

U.S. PERSONNEL IN VIET-NAM (1958-1961)*

United States Embassy ^a	90
United States Information Service (USIS) ^a	35
United States Operations Mission (USOM) ^b	555
Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) ^c	1,000
Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission (TERM) ^d	350
Michigan State University Group (MSU)/CIA ^e	52
TOTAL	2,082

* These figures have been gathered from various sources and reflect different time periods. Figures for the U.S. Embassy and USIS may be maximum numbers for the period. USOM figures include contract-employees. Not included are various private US citizens engaged in business or missionary work, American dependents and temporary visitors.

- SOURCES: ^a Robert Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, p.192-3; he places USOM at less than 200, MAAG at less than 700 and American dependents at 800.
- ^b John D. Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid, p.177; these include ICA contract and career employees as of May 31, 1958.
- ^c Bernard B. Fall, "Will South Vietnam Be Next?", The Nation (May 31, 1958); Fall writes, "And a vast U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) - its exact size is classified but including well over a thousand officers and men..."The official figures placed the number at 342; "U.S. Denies Build-Up", The New York Times (16 May 1957), p.11.
- ^d "US Training of the Vietnamese National Army, 1954-1959", United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967, Book 2, IV.A.4. Chronology, p.MM.
- ^e Robert Scigliano and Guy H. Fox, Technical Assistance in Vietnam, p.8; prior to 1957 the figure stood at 34 in the 1957-62 period it never exceeded 52. Dennis Duncanson, Government and Revolution in Vietnam, p.276 states that prior to 1961 the total number of employees assigned to USOM, USIS, MSU and the CIA was less than 300. This estimate obviously excludes the 372 USOM contract-employees.

Hanoi may well have included civilian officials in their count (see Table 7-9 above). 212 (continued next page)

The PAVN High Command continued to note the arrival of American planes and ships bearing "war material".²¹³ In 1957 the High Command addressed 69 letters to the ICC concerning alleged illegal arrivals of planes (70 cases) and shipment of "illegal war material" (105 cases).²¹⁴ A review of Commission reports covering the period August 1956-February 1961 is shown in Table 7-10. The figures for violations are minimum figures as the ICC was prevented from controlling the arrival of numerous ships and aircraft at various RVN installations. There are numerous references to this situation in the ICC reports of this period.²¹⁵

VIII. CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to provide a detailed account of the major policies pursued by the Diem regime which had an impact on the underground Party apparatus during 1957-58. The next chapter will view this same period from the point of view of the Party. This introduction to the 1957-58

²¹³ See the protests by Ha Van Lau, Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1128 GMT, June 21, 1958; Vo Nguyen Giap, *ibid.*, English morse to Southeast Asia, 1135 GMT, June 21, 1958; and Pham Van Dong (to the Geneva Conference Co-chairmen) in *ibid.*, in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, June 28, 1958. See also *ibid.*, in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1129 GMT, June 28, 1957.

²¹⁴ Vietnam News Agency, in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1115 GMT, April 7, 1958; for other complaints see: *ibid.*, in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1110 GMT, March 27, 1958.

²¹⁵ Seventh Interim Report, op.cit., p.13-20; Eighth Interim Report, op.cit., p.9-15; Ninth Interim Report, op.cit., p.11-18; Tenth Interim Report, op.cit., p.15-25; and Eleventh Interim Report, op.cit., p.14-23 and 25-27.

²¹² Ninth Interim Report, op. cit., p. 13; Tenth Interim Report, op. cit., pp. 19-20; and dispatch by Greg MacGregor in The New York Times (October 9, 1957), p. 3.

TABLE 7-10
PAVN COMPLAINTS TO THE ICC CONCERNING U.S. MILITARY
PERSONNEL & EQUIPMENT

<u>DATES</u>	<u>Article 16¹</u>		<u>Article 17²</u>	
	<u>PAVN Complaints</u>	<u>Violations Recorded</u>	<u>PAVN Complaints</u>	<u>Violations Recorded</u>
1 Aug '56 - 30 Apr '57	96	5	114	3
1 May '57 - 30 Apr '58	31	13	45	6
1 May '58 - 31 Jan '59	16	27 ^a	26	6
1 Feb '59 - 31 Jan '60	147	12	132	20
1 Feb '60 - 28 Feb '61	122	3	132	34

¹ Article 16 (a-g) bans the introduction of additional military personnel

² Article 17 (a-f) bans the reinforcement of all types of arms, munitions, and other war material, such as combat aircraft, naval craft, pieces of ordnance, jet engines and jet weapons, and armored vehicles.

^a Complaints filed in one time period are usually determined in a later report. It is therefore possible for the number of violations recorded in one period to exceed the number of PAVN complaints at the same time.

period has been necessary for three reasons. Firstly, it serves to indicate the continuing competition for rural legitimacy between the Diem regime and the various opponents of that regime. All too often this element of continuity has been overlooked. In other words the RVN had to devote a large amount of its resources to establish and maintain its authority over dissident areas. Both the large-scale military sweeps and the conduct of the anti-Communist

denunciation campaign were part of this overwhelming concern to establish security in the countryside.

Secondly, a review of the 1957-59 period sheds light on the nature of the political problems confronting the Diem regime. Diem's failure to successfully cope with problems of rural indebtedness and tenancy, for example, left festering grievances which the Party attempted to solve. The resettlement program, designed to secure Vietnam's borders against "Communist infiltration" had the reverse impact in the Highlands. There the Party found a sympathetic audience for its anti-government propaganda. In the lowlands, meanwhile, the resettlement program was much more successful²¹⁶ as landless refugees were given a stake in the future. Nevertheless discontent arose between the newcomers and the locals as the latter felt Diem was giving the former special treatment.²¹⁷

Thirdly, a study of the growth the Ngo family's political machine (in combination with its repression of most opposition groups) and the increasing American military and economic influence (which caused anxiety in Hanoi) both provide insights into future anti-government themes. The corruption and nepotism of the Diem regime, whether real or partly imagined, sparked domestic disaffection. Indeed in September-October 1958 there appears to have been an attempt on the part of some civilians

²¹⁶ Nevertheless there were some problems, See: David Wurfel, "Agrarian Reform in the Republic of Vietnam", op.cit., p.88.

²¹⁷ Scheer, How the United States Got Involved in Vietnam, op.cit., p.44 and 46; Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid, op.cit., p.70-71.

in alliance with disgruntled army officers to promote a coup,²¹⁸ thus foreshadowing the more publicized events of November 1960.

Increasing American influence coupled with the acceptance of the RVN on the world stage (see chapter nine) only served to convince Party leaders that they must redouble their efforts to reunify Viet-Nam lest the southern Republic became too strong. There are two sides to the coin of rural discontent which emerged in Viet-Nam from 1957 onward. The actions and policies of the Diem regime which in themselves contributed to rural discontent represent one side. On the other side of the coin are the policies and actions of the Party's underground organization which was engaged in the study of a new strategy outlined in "On the Revolution in South Viet-Nam". This situation has been aptly described by George Carver, an American CIA official who served under civilian cover in Viet-Nam in 1959-60:

The 1956-58 period was unusually complex, even for Viet-Nam. Diem, in effect, reached his political high-water mark sometime around mid-1957. After that, his methods of operation,

²¹⁸ U.S. Department of State, Intelligence Report: The Outlook for North and South Vietnam, op.cit., p.9; in February 1957 an assassin unsuccessfully tried to kill Diem at an agricultural fair in Ban Me Thuot, "Last News: President Diem Undisturbed By Fanatic's Shooting", The Times of Viet Nam (February 23, 1957), Vol.2, No.7, p.16; Jacques Lefebvre, "After the Ban Me Thuot Attempt", ibid. (February 25, 1957), Vol.2, No.2, p.2. Dispatch from Ban Me Thuot by Foster Hailey in The New York Times (February 23, 1957), p.1 and 8. There is some evidence that another attempt may have been made on President Diem by soldiers stationed at the Saigon airport in January 1958, see Voice of Vietnam dictation in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0030 GMT, January 30, 1958 which cites a United Press dispatch of January 27, 1958 and Moscow Radio, which in turn is quoted as referring to New York news sources.

traits of character and dependence on his family became set with ever increasing rigidity along lines which ultimately led to his downfall. Despite undeniable progress in its early years, his government was never successful in giving the bulk of the South Vietnamese peasantry positive reasons for identifying their personal fortunes with its political course. The administrators Diem posted to the countryside were often corrupt and seldom native to the areas to which they were assigned, a fact which caused them to be considered as "foreigners" by the intensely clannish and provincial peasantry. Land policies, often admirable in phraseology, were notably weak in execution and frequently operated to the benefit of absentee landlords rather than those who actually tilled the soil.

Such factors as these, coupled with the still manifest consequences of a decade of war, generated genuine grievances among the peasantry which the Communists were quick to exploit and exacerbate.²¹⁹

²¹⁹ Carver, "The Faceless Viet Cong", op.cit., p.358-359.

CHAPTER 8

MAINTAINING AND DEVELOPING THE STRUGGLE MOVEMENT IN THE SOUTH

I. THE SECOND CONFERENCE OF THE NAM BO REGIONAL COMMITTEE

Sometime in early 1957, probably before March, the Nam Bo Regional Committee¹ convened its second conference to discuss the practical application of the Central Committee's new policy line embodied in "Duong Loi Cach

¹ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.32; Republic of Viet-Nam, Ministry of National Defence, Study of the Activation and Activities of R, op.cit., p.17, remarks that from late 1956 "this was the first step in the 'attention to the south phase'". According to a former Party cadre the location of the Regional Committee was just north of Katum village in Tay Ninh province, see: Working Paper Appendices, Item 63. According to Republic of Viet-Nam, Ministry of the Interior, Ban Tran Liet Viet Cong [Viet Cong Order of Battle] (Saigon: 1957), p.22 in Jeffrey Race, compiler, Vietnamese Materials, Microfilm Reel III, document A, p.2, the composition of the Nam Bo Regional Committee in 1957 was as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Pham Huu Lau | - secretary |
| Nguyen Van Cuc | - deputy secretary with responsibility for finance and communications (kinh-tai va giao-lien) |
| Le Toan Thu | - Committee member with special responsibility for internal party organization |
| Mai Chi Tho | - Committee member with responsibility for propaganda against the enemy in the provinces |
| Phan Van Dang | - Committee member with responsibility for enemy proselyting among the enemy (binh van) |
| Nguyen Huu The | - Committee member with responsibility for cultural affairs |
| Nguyen Van Kiet | - Committee member with responsibility for the Saigon-Cholon zone committee |
| Vo Van Khanh | - Committee member with responsibility for the Eastern Nam Bo Zone Committee |
| Pham Thai Buong | - Committee member with responsibility for the Western Nam Bo Zone Committee |
| Cao Dang Chiem | - Committee member with responsibility for "guiding steering committees" (dac-phai chi-dao chuyen-mon) |
| Nguyen Van Mui | - Committee member with responsibility for Central Nam Bo Zone Committee |
| Tran Bach Dang | - Committee member with responsibility for propaganda and training (tuyen-huan) |

Mang Mien Nam".² As we have noted earlier, this key document served to dispel disquiet among Party cadres in the south who had become increasingly concerned at the remote chances for national unification caused by the growing disparity of forces to the advantage of the Diem regime. According to one of the rare accounts of this meeting:

the resolution of the [2nd] Regional conference considered the question of armed forces [luc luong vo trang]. According to this assessment, armed forces should be developed to cope with the renewal of fighting. The reason the conference mentioned this subject was because at that time the reality [of the situation] in Nam Bo was that all the armed forces opposing Diem belonged to the religious sects. The Regional Committee did not clearly understand the fundamental importance of armed force in the revolutionary struggle in Nam Bo.³

Among the long-range preparations set in train by the conference was the reorganization of existing military units "and unifying the command of these forces".⁴ Preparations were also made to plant agents into various RVN departments, including the military.⁵

Apparently sometime in late 1956, the Regional Committee began to discuss the means by which armed force would be used to overthrow the Diem regime. The most-favoured scenario was based on the model provided by

² Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.32.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Republic of Viet-Nam, Ministry of National Defence, Study of the Activation and Activities of R, op.cit., p.17.

⁵ Ibid.

the 1945 August Revolution. However by early 1957 the Nam Bo Committee "did not outline the methods for carrying out this plan".⁶ In part this was due to the Committee's reluctance not to cause confusion among the lower ranks who were about to be launched on a new round of political struggle.⁷ The discussion would also have been premature given the state of the Party's organization.

In 1954, after signing the Geneva Agreements, the Party embarked on a "reduction of cadres" movement designed to streamline the Party apparatus (see Chapter 2, section I). By 1957 Party members had been reduced from 60,000 to 15,000.⁸ It was upon these "inner core" of cadres that the Party was going to rely in the new phase of consolidation and rebuilding.

As we have noted in a previous chapter, the initial political struggle movement had been orientated around the various provisions of the Geneva Agreements. After July 1956 the Party decided to emphasize other issues.⁹

⁶ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.31.

⁷ Race, "The Origins of the Second Indochina War", op.cit., pp.368-369; see also the transcript of Race's interview with Vo Van An in Race's Vietnamese Materials, Reel II, pp.20-22.

⁸ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.25; this amounted to a reduction of one in every four Party members. This figure varied as for example there were 1,000 cadres in Go Vap and Tan Binh district committees in 1954, in 1957 this number was reduced to 385, *ibid.*, p.26 (25% = 250). Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., pp.138-139 reports on the classification of cadres into two groups.

⁹ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.31; among them were the election of a new National Assembly and the formation of a coalition government.

According to one account, "from 1957 the people's struggle shifted to demanding social welfare and democracy. The political slogans used in 1955 and 1956 were seldom seen".¹⁰ This reorientation of the struggle movement was considered by the second conference which decided to inaugurate a "second phase in the struggle movement in Nam Bo".¹¹ This change in emphasis, noticeable in late 1956, was now reaffirmed. "Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam" set forth three major themes that would be stressed in the renewed political struggle movement in Nam Bo: (1) peace and unification, (2) democracy and (3) social welfare (popular livelihood).¹²

II. POLITICAL STRUGGLE (1957-58)

The second phase of the struggle movement lasted until mid-1959 when, according to Party accounts, it "came to a deadlock".¹³ By mid-1958 a loss of momentum was already noticeable. During this period "[t]he Party Regional Committee advocated that the main goals of the revolutionary movement were the struggle for democratic rights and the struggle for social welfare".¹⁴

¹⁰ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.17.

¹¹ Ibid., p.23.

¹² Ibid., p.17, 23 and 33; and Republic of Viet-Nam, Ministry of National Defence, Study of the Activation and Activities of R, op.cit., p.37.

¹³ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.23.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.33.

However the Regional Committee stressed that the struggle movement "should not be conducted simultaneously and everywhere but should be concentrated in specific local areas and at an appropriate time".¹⁵

Under the catchcry "democracy" the Party focused its attention on abuses in the day-to-day operations of the Diem regime at all levels, especially in the hamlets and villages. In practice Diemist officials provided many opportunities on which the Party could act. Although detailed and verifiable non-Communist accounts are often lacking, the following examples illustrate the Party's view of what was going on at that time.

In late 1956 Party cadres living amongst the refugee communities in Saigon-Cholon began to stir up protests against the RVN's resettlement program as well as to the shifting of people due to the construction of roads or new military installations. At issue was the reluctance of some refugees to move to another location after having been settled for a year or more. Party cadres were not alone in perceiving these grievances as several parish priests also led public protests. No doubt many refugee families were glad to obtain land and moved willingly. But elsewhere it seems that over-efficient bureaucrats used coercion to get the people moving. Saigon press accounts cited by the Vietnam News Agency provide a glimpse into these events:

¹⁵ Ibid.

Early this month, when a delegation from the municipal council came to districts where houses had to be dismantled, tens of thousands of inhabitants of all strata handed over to it hundreds of petitions demanding that people be allowed to remain in their present places.

In Ba Co, as elsewhere, banners were carried by demonstrators stretched across the roads or stuck on walls. These bore slogans: "no more evacuations!", "house-shifting costs much blood and tears!" In the third district of Saigon-Cholon, people have posted immediately beneath the government dismantling order, the following: "This is what Tran Van Lam has brought to the people of Ban Co after being elected".¹⁶

Abuses, documented in the Saigon press, resulted from the conduct of military operations and the conduct of the anti-Communist denunciation campaign in the rural areas: extortion, beatings, lootings, etc. Covert Party cadres noted the details and widely circulated embellished accounts of what occurred.¹⁷

¹⁶ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0544 GMT, December 14, 1956; in 1956 Tran Van Lam was elected to the RVN's National Assembly.

¹⁷ Hoa Binh Thong Nhut [Peace and Unification] (Long An province committee) Nos.39/40 (December 22, 1958) carries stories describing torture, attempted rape, and the struggle movement opposing "illegal searches" by RVN authorities, in Race, compiler, Vietnamese Materials, Microfilm Reel I, Document 1014. Hanoi Radio in Vietnamese, 0115 GMT, April 23, 1957 cited Cach Mang Quoc Gia (April 15, 1957) for a description of a case of extortion. A case of bribery (to free an alleged Viet Cong suspect) is reported in "District Chief Ngo Van Chuyen Arrested for Receiving Bribe", The Times of Viet Nam (November 22, 1958), Vol.2, No.259, p.1; a story of beatings by the security police may be found in "'Security Police Not to Beat People', Declared Sec'y of State for Interior", *ibid.* (November 24, 1958), Vol.2, No.260, p.1 and 2; cases of murder and robbery at the hands of the militia is reported in "Militia Men Sued for Killing, Arresting and Robbing", *ibid.* (November 25, 1958), Vol.2, No.261, p.1 and 2. The case of militia torturing to death an alleged Communist suspect in September 1957 is reported in "Sentenced 2 Years With Reprieve for Torturing People to Death", *ibid.* (November 28, 1958), Vol.2, No.264, p.2; another case, which occurred in July 1958 is reported in the same article. Further cases

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Under the banner of "democracy" Party cadres also encouraged the already strong protest against the renewal of conscription. In Quang Tri province, for example, scores of letters were sent to the provincial authorities demanding that youths eligible for the draft "be allowed to stay home to look after their old parents".¹⁸ Face-to-face confrontations were arranged between the local people and the officials at which "pointed questions" were raised.¹⁹ As we shall discuss below, armed propaganda teams encouraged draft-eligible young men to flee to safe-havens.

Party cadres also directed their efforts at the sizeable Khmer Krom community in the Delta provinces. One of the main grievances was the discriminatory policies of government officials who closed Khmer-language schools and restricted teaching in the Khmer language. ~~Various~~ Various delegations were organized to protest these activities. Tra Vinh province appears to have been the

17 cont'd

of looting, stealing and murder are reported in "Civil Guard Sergeant Gets Death Sentence", *ibid.* (December 11, 1958), Vol.2, No.275, p.2. See also the comments by Denis Duncanson, Government and Revolution, *op.cit.*, p.297; "Everywhere peasant grievances against authority, or feuds with other groups often identified with authority in the uniform of the militia or the Civil Guard, as well as credence for Vietcong offer of land, added their quota, if not a large one, of malcontents vulnerable to a sympathetic ear and helping hand".

¹⁸ Vietnam News Agency in English Morse to Southeast Asia, 0546 GMT, September 10, 1957.

¹⁹ Hanoi Radio in Vietnamese, 1200 GMT, November 28, 1958.

centre of these disturbances. There one protest march clashed with the local Civil Guard.²⁰ Party cadres also focused on a wide variety of issues, the most important of which concerned land.

Prior to July 1956 Party officials pressed for reunification elections, arguing that the new national government would confirm titles to land distributed during the Resistance War.²¹ After the commencement of Diem's land reform program Party cadres put forward the argument that the present occupants of redistributed land should not cooperate with the RVN's schemes lest they provide absentee landlords with a basis for asserting legal ownership.

In early 1957, probably as a result of the second conference of the Nam Bo Regional Committee, the Party issued new guidelines on the land issue. The new policy sought to reap a dual harvest of landlord and peasant discontent over the implementation of RVN Ordinances Nos.2 and 57. The Party's land policy took into account the transparent defects and shortcomings of the RVN's efforts. According to a later review, "[o]ne of the reactionary forces in the rural areas is the landlords.

²⁰ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0553 GMT, November 22, 1957; see also Burchett, Inside Story of the Guerilla War, op.cit., pp.178-179.

²¹ Shigeto Kawano, "Socio-Economic Significance of Land Reform in Southeast Asian Countries", The Developing Economies, Issue No.1, p.42; Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., pp.106 and 140-141.

The enemy helps them collect taxes. His decrees, no.57, 2 etc. ... are aimed at restoring to the landlords and Vietnamese traitors (Viet gian) the right of ownership of land previously confiscated during the Resistance.²² However the Party also perceived differences between landlords (who objected to land reform) and the Diem regime:

Diem thought that his government was supported by all the landlords in Nam Bo but the fact is that his government received the support of only a small number, especially refugees from the North. A large number of landlords in Nam Bo were either neutral or disliked Diem.²³

The new land policy took three factors into account: (1) the landlord's opposition to the RVN's land reform, (2) peasant opposition to a change in the status quo and (3) the RVN's capacity to maintain security in the countryside. Therefore the Party set out to sabotage the RVN's plans and to play upon the grievances of all concerned. It did so in the full knowledge that the vast majority of peasants would not benefit from the RVN's land reform.

The Party's policy towards the landlords was conditioned in part on the basis of experience gained during the Resistance. At that time land was confiscated from landlords only if they were considered pro-French, "traitors", cruel or corrupt.²⁴ Landlords who remained in the liberated areas were permitted to collect rent, albeit on a reduced

²² Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.9.

²³ Ibid., p.13; and Wurfel, "Agrarian Reform in the Republic of Vietnam", op.cit., pp.85-88.

²⁴ Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., pp.88, 91 and 106.

scale. In 1957 the Party attempted to play on discontent among landlords aroused by the RVN's land reform ordinances by suggesting that alternate arrangements be worked out with the tenants including, if necessary, the direct purchase of land.

Concerning the peasants, the Party adopted the view that its main aim should be to keep them on the land they were presently tilling and to organize various forms of protests to delay the implementation of Ordinances Nos.2 and 57. However the Party recognized that the peasant's strong desire to own his own land presented a complication. On the one hand, some peasants would resist all attempts to restore the status quo ante because they believed that land abandoned during the Resistance which the Party had redistributed, was theirs. On the other hand, other peasants would be stampeded by the provisions of Ordinances Nos.2 and 57 into signing new model contracts or into purchasing a clear land title. Given these circumstances the Party formulated the following policy:

Temporarily set aside the slogan that the peasantry has achieved ownership of the land. Instead, pay attention to the principle of maintaining the current tiller on his land.

This is the general policy for the entire South. Take care not to abandon the old policy [of the Resistance] all at once but rather rely on the local balance of forces to determine whether to continue emphasizing ownership or to abandon it temporarily.²⁵

²⁵ Xu Uy Nam Bo, Chanh Sach Dien Dia [Policy on Land] (October 1957), pp.1-4 in Race, compiler, Vietnamese Materials, Microfilm Reel No.I, document 1005.

In other words, the Party had assessed the "balance of forces" between itself and the Diem regime and had decided "to move one step back". Diem would incur the opprobrium of the landlords - for restricting rents and expropriating land - and peasants - for upsetting the gains they had made during the Resistance. Due to the RVN's administrative weakness Party cadres in the villages could turn Diem's land reform to their own advantage. This important point has been aptly summarised by Samuel Popkin:

Viet Cong success has always been at least partially attributable to its ability to enforce and carry out GVN proclamations. Ironically, often only an "illegal" group had this capability. The execution of Diem's land reform provides an example. The Viet Cong no doubt profited from the land problem, but not simply because Diem was a reactionary or an oppressive ruler. It was able to use land reform by transforming into a political issue a seemingly arbitrary set of decisions which peasants did not feel morally obligated to accept.

The Vietnamese system of land tenure could be exploited in many ways even without large-scale redistribution of land: rent levels, market prices, interest rates, and fertilizer prices. All could be manipulated to improve the welfare of the individual farmer. Diem's policies for dealing with these vagaries were often sound: set rent ceilings, provide for displaced persons, institute loan programs. But because he lacked effective organization for reaching into the village, Diem was unable to implement his programs. Only the Viet Cong had the necessary links with the peasantry. Thus, for many peasants the Viet Cong easily emerged as the champion of the just cause simply by carrying out the government's promises.²⁶

²⁶ Samuel Popkin, "South Vietnam: Villages Under Diem", in Steven Spiegel and Kenneth Waltz, eds., Conflict in World Politics (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Winthrop Pub. Inc., 1971), pp.267-268; see also Samuel Popkin, "The Myth of the Village: Revolution and Reaction in Vietnam", PhD Thesis, M.I.T., 1969, pp.39-98.

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In addition to the issue of land, the "social welfare" component of the political struggle movement embraced a variety of other issues: conditions in the refugee camps, American economic aid and cultural presence²⁷ and petty restrictions on trade imposed by the Diem government. Party cadres encouraged refugees to demand improvements in their supply of electricity and water, especially in camps around Saigon where the demands for these services was already overburdened. Demands for the construction of new schools and anti-illiteracy classes were also voiced.²⁸

Two aspects of the American presence in particular came under attack. Firstly, "depraved American culture" in the form of "obscene films" and pornography was condemned.

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Popkin is of course discussing a paradox in Party policy. On the one hand, especially in areas where the Party had significant influence, Party cadres would carry out the Party's land policies. Because they did so efficiently they won support for their efforts. On the other hand, where Party influence was weak, Party cadres would take advantage of the contradictions in the RVN's land policy, specifically the intent of the law versus its implementation. In this case the cadres would earn credit for protecting a tenant against common abuses (rent over the legal maximum, additional charges, etc.)

27 Tor. Vy, "The Workers' Struggle", Vietnamese Studies (1966), No.8, p.80. "The import of 'U.S. aid' goods smothered several industrial and handicraft branches and further increased unemployment. In 1958, five to six million metres of cloth remained unsold as a result of the dumping of 'U.S. aid' fabrics. Weaving mills were forced to close down, throwing 80 per cent of their employees out of work". See also Bernard B. Fall, "Will South Vietnam Be Next?", op.cit., and Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.11 which discusses economic conditions between 1955-57.

28 Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0544 (MT, December 14, 1956; and *ibid.* in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, December 17, 1956.

According to the Voice of Vietnam "the southern compatriots have repeatedly demanded that the Southern authorities reform their educational system and limit the importation of these obscene American films".²⁹ Secondly, the commodity surplus under the CIP (discussed in chapter seven) came under attack for threatening local industry.³⁰ In response Party cadres launched a "movement for support of locally made goods".³¹ Other cadres placed "Yankee Go Home" leaflets in the mailboxes belonging to Americans serving in Saigon.³²

Various demonstrations were organized throughout Viet-Nam in response to local grievances. In March 1957, for example, "small shopkeepers" were urged "to fight

²⁹ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 1200 GMT, February 20, 1957; and "Saigon: Bastion of the Anti-US Struggle", op.cit., p.25 mentions a movement in 1957 "against US aid and the enslaving culture".

³⁰ "Local industry is in a fix. Warehouses are bulging with imports, traders are suffering great losses. Most of them face bankruptcy because, being refused free trade with foreign countries, and being confined within [the] vicious circle of US aid, they find themselves obliged to import goods which not only are unnecessary to people's life, but also strangle the country's own new-fledged industry. Due to spreading unemployment, the purchasing power continues to fall and people's living standards are lowered while taxes are constantly rising. Many kinds of taxes bear down upon the masses, such as the 6% production tax, the license tax, and hundreds of other direct taxes", in Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1122 GMT, June 18, 1958.

³¹ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 1200 GMT, July 21, 1957.

³² Fall, The Two Viet-Nam's, op.cit., p.331.

back against those who have stolen your sweat and tears".³³ The following month Radio Hanoi reported on the protests launched by small traders at the Cau Muoi market against shortened market hours and additional restrictions placed on the sale of pre-cooked food.³⁴ Various taxes, fees and duties which affected the small businessman were also subject to public protest.³⁵

Party militants (underground cadres) in the cities encouraged various workers' organizations to engage in protests and other public demonstrations, including strikes. These actions were classified as "legal activities" by the Party because they were specifically related to worker grievances and they were conducted in a peaceful manner. In other words they were designed to conform to the range of public activity permitted by the Diem regime, while at the same time acting as a test of these limits. The government authorities were placed in the position of having to decide whether or not to break up an ostensibly "legitimate" protest.³⁶

³³ Bo Chi Huy Khu Vuc Tan An - Cholon, "Loi Keu Goi" [Headquarters, Tan An - Cholon Special Zone, "Appeal"] (March 4, 1957), pp.1-5 in Jeffrey Race, compiler, Vietnamese Materials, Microfilm Reel I, document No.1003.

³⁴ The incident, which occurred on April 20th, was reported by Hanoi Radio in Vietnamese, 0115 GMT, May 8, 1957.

³⁵ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia 1122 GMT, June 18, 1958; see also the discussion in Jeffrey Race, "How They Won", Asian Survey (August 1970), Vol.X, No.8, pp.640-641.

³⁶ Ibid., p.643, "It was Party policy to provoke the government into repressive and violent actions, such that government repressive acts and demands and government violence would themselves become a major conflict issue, superimposed on existing distributive conflicts within Vietnamese society".

Vu Can has described the aims of the workers' urban struggle movement as follows:

Each social group struggled firstly for its particular objectives: the workers and employees struggled against unemployment, for decent wages and better working conditions, for trade union freedoms ..., the students for more educational establishments, for teaching in the national language, against systematic rejections in examinations and forced conscription; the intellectuals for freedom of opinion, of speech, freedom of the press, for the safeguarding of national culture and traditions threatened by the introduction of the "American way of life"; the small merchants for a less harsh fiscal system; the industrialists and craftsmen for the protection of national industry and handicrafts stifled by "US aid". Even big businessmen and certain groups of the comprador bourgeoisie manifested their opposition to the ruling clique, demanding free enterprise and monopoly held by Diem's family.³⁷

The extent of the Party's influence on urban protests is difficult to measure, given its clandestine nature. Party-inspired accounts of workers' struggles are self-serving and exaggerated.³⁸ Thus it is impossible to

³⁷ Vu Can, "The People's Struggles Against the US-Diem Regime", op.cit., p.91. For an account of the student struggle at this time consult, To Minh Trung, "The Students' and Pupils' Struggle", ibid. (1966), No.8, p.112-180.

³⁸ Communist sources have given estimates from 200,000 in Saigon, to 300,000 and even 500,000, see respectively: Ton Vy, "The Workers' Struggle", op.cit., p.91 states 200,000 demonstrated in Saigon and another 280,000 in the provinces; "Saigon: Bastion of the Anti-US Struggle", op.cit., p.25 states that a parade in Saigon consisted of 300,000 "workers, students, intellectuals, traders and industrialists", and "Following the Bright Road", Viet Nam Pictorial [Hanoi] (February 1974), No.185, p.18, gives a figure of half a million. These figures are obviously gross overestimates as Ton Vy, citing Saigon figures, states that there are 316,230 workers in the South (255,230 factory workers and 61,000 plantation workers) and that of the 2 million residents in Saigon, only 123,800 are workers; "The Workers' Struggle", op.cit., p.79. For a contemporary account, which provides no figures see: Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0527 GMT, May 10, 1957.

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determine how many strikes were instigated by covert Party cadres³⁹ and how many strikes occurred independently of this activity. According to accounts published by Hanoi 292 collective actions were undertaken in 1955, 504 in 1956 and 804 in 1957-58.⁴⁰ Nevertheless it does seem certain that the Party encouraged and supported whatever actions workers decided to take against their employers and that Party influence was strongest among the workers on the rubber plantations.⁴¹

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Party sources claim that 500,000 persons marched through the streets in May 1958, these figures may be contrasted to Saigon press reports which claim that May Day festivities drew three separate crowds totalling 100,000 and that anti-Communist slogans were in evidence; see respectively: Ton Vy, "The Workers' Struggle", op.cit., p.86 and "Trade Unions Make Huge May Day Celebrations", The Times of Viet Nam (May 2, 1958), Vol.II, No.89, pp.1 and 2. Cf. James B. Hendry, "The Social and Economic Characteristics of the Work Force in Saigon", in Fishel, editor, Problems of Freedom, op.cit., pp.191-218.

³⁹ A photograph of the May 1, 1957 demonstration reproduced in "Following the Bright Road", op.cit., p.18 contains a picture of Thanh Loan. According to her official biography, "Struggling in Saigon during the Resistance War, she took part in founding the Artists' Mutual Assistance. After the signing of the Geneva Agreements she carried out underground anti-US activities. Elected member of the Executive Committee of the Trade Union of Saigon Actors and Stage Setters in 1955, she went to the liberated areas in 1963 ..." Commission for Foreign Relations of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, Personalities of the South Vietnam Liberation Movement (n.p., circa 1963), p.40. "Following the Bright Road", reports that she went to the liberated areas in late 1961.

⁴⁰ Ton Vy, "The Workers' Struggle", op.cit., p.94 and "Saigon: Bastion of the Anti-US Struggle", op.cit., p.25. The Vietnam News Agency on January 16, 1958 reported that over 200 struggles took place between January and November in 1957 and that this was an increase over 1956.

⁴¹ Ton Vy, "The Workers' Struggle", op.cit., p.86.

Table 8-1 sets out the various forms of labour unrest reported during this period. Although the main emphasis was on economic grievances, the Party tried to link these demands with those of "democracy" and "peace-independence-reunification". According to Ton Vy:

Political slogans demanding freedom, democracy, reunification of the country through peaceful means, restoration of normal relations between the two zones, were used together with slogans⁴² demanding the improvement of living conditions.

The Party was not always successful, however, as Ton Vy observed: "[t]he South Vietnamese working class ... clearly realized that the economic struggle should be combined with political and ideological struggle" in practice but "[a]t some times and in some places, this triple aspect of the workers' struggle cannot be [could not be?] maintained ..."

TABLE 8-1

LABOUR UNREST IN SOUTH VIET-NAM (NOVEMBER 1956-DECEMBER 1958)

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Location:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
November 1956	Saigon	Strikes by B.G.I. distillery workers and employees of a brick and tile factory
	Nha Be	Standard Vacuum Oil Co. employees strike; Caltex and Shell workers demonstrate solidarity
	Saigon	Strike by Delignon Society workers in protest against earlier dismissals

⁴² Ibid., p.96. These slogans appeared in Saigon on May Day 1958. The following quotation is from p.90.

TABLE 8-1 continued

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Location:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
January 1957	Saigon	Dockers strike for wage increase, holiday pay
April 1957	Ba Ria	Gallia rubber plantation workers strike for new contracts, reinstatement of dismissed employees, half wages for strikers, protest arbitrary dismissals, against reprisals, demand repair of workers' housing
April 1957	Saigon	Gai Ty sawmill employees strike in protest of firing of workers Quang Sanh Trung sawmill workers demand wage increase
May 1957	Saigon	May Day demonstration in streets Power plant workers strike when salary claim is rejected
	Loc Ninh and Thu Dau Mot	6,000 rubber plantation workers protest extended working hours
	Saigon	Maccadi Metallurgical workers make wage demands
	Da-Lat	Cau Dat tea plantation workers present wage demands
	Saigon	Bus Company employees demand minimum wages, accident benefits, sickness allowances

TABLE 8-1 continued

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Location:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
July 1957	Saigon	Standard Vacuum Oil Co. workers demand higher wages
	Bien Hoa	Tran Lam pottery workers present list of 19 demands
September 1957	Thu Dau Mot	Xa Cat, Xa Trach and Dau Tieng rubber plantation workers demand improved living conditions and a wage rise
	Saigon	Employees of Commercial Bank of Southeast Asia strike for salary readjustments, and family allowances
October 1957	Saigon and Cholon	Chinese workers protest RVN decree banning them from 11 occupations
December 1957	Saigon	Waterside workers protest illegal sackings
	Bien Hoa	Rubber plantation workers protest repression of labour movement, demand improved living conditions
January 1958	Saigon	Federation of Dockers on strike in protest over collusion between their leaders and government
		Air Transport Co. - 800 employees strike for better pay, improved living conditions
February-March 1958	Saigon	Caltex workers protest maltreatment, go on strike

TABLE 8-1 continued

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Location:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
May 1958	Saigon	May Day demonstration
July 1958	Da Nang	Power station employees strike for better working and living conditions
October 1958	Ban Me Thuot, Ninh Hoa and Nha Trang	Road workers on Route 21 strike to protest recent dismissals, for special Highland allowances; steam roller drivers on strike
November 1958	Saigon-Nha Be	Oil workers on strike
	Binh Thuan	Fish cannery workers strike for family allowances
	Binh Long	14,000 rubber plantation workers strike to demand collective agreement between management and workers
	Saigon-Cholon	Small traders protest tax increase
	Mekong Delta	Bus line employees strike for improved living conditions, rehiring of two fired colleagues
December 1958	Chuong Duong, and Van Don	Port workers on strike
	Vinh Long	Brick layers strike at salary drop
	Saigon	Cau Kho plant of B.G.I., workers strike to protest five recent sackings

TABLE 8-1 continued

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Location:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
December 1958	Binh Duong	Sugar mill employees protest salary decrease, foreign sugar imports, and demand subsidy to maintain their living standards

SOURCES: Cach Mang Quoc Gia, May 10, 1957; New China News Agency, November 3, 15 and 24, 1958; The Times of Viet Nam, January 8, 1957, November 25 and 29, December 4 and 18, 1958; Vietnam, No.186, February 1974, p.18; Vietnam Courier, June 1975, No.37, p.25; Vietnam News Agency, 26 May 1957 - 26 December 1958; Vietnamese Studies, No.8, pp.78-111, and Nos.18/19, pp.55-129; Working Paper, Item 209, p.19; and Radio Hanoi, October 2, 1957.

As we have noted earlier, the Party muted the themes associated with reunification in favour of more pragmatic concerns. Nevertheless a low-keyed effort was conducted to keep these issues alive.⁴³ On the occasion of the RVN's National Day (October 26, 1958), for example, slogans demanding "peace and reunification" were daubed on walls in Saigon while posters printed by the RVN were defaced and torn down. Elsewhere (in Quang Nam, Quang Ngai and Vinh Long provinces) RVN soldiers and civil servants were subjected to slogans shouted over loud hailers.⁴⁴ During

⁴³ Joseph Zasloff, Origins of the Insurgency, op.cit., p.20 cites a case of a man who was recruited in 1957. These themes were used in recruitment.

⁴⁴ Dispatch from Hanoi by New China News Agency on November 12, 1958.

the year various leaflets were circulated throughout Viet-Nam. One reproduced the DRVN's March 8, 1958 call for the normalisation of North-South relations.⁴⁵

Another, distributed in Ba Xuyen province, called upon RVN government employees to:

Support the just struggle of the people to overthrow the government of the Americans and Diem [My-Diem], to establish a democratic regime in the South, and to work for general elections which will reunify the country by peaceful means.⁴⁶

During the eighteen month period from early 1957 to mid-1958 the Party was relatively successful in its efforts to launch phase two of the political struggle movement. But as time went on the capacity of the RVN to meet and overcome this challenge increased. According to one Party cadre, "the [Diem] government began to establish its village and hamlet apparatus in the remote rural areas where the French never dared to set foot. When the government local apparatus was established this naturally limited the Party's activities".⁴⁷

⁴⁵ "Cong Ham Cua Thu Tuong Chanh Phu Nuoc Viet Nam Dan Chu Cong Hoa Goi Tong Thong Cong Hoa Viet Nam" [A Diplomatic Note from the Premier of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam to the President of the Republic of Viet-Nam] (December 22, 1958) as reprinted by the Long An province committee; in Race, compiler, Vietnamese Materials, Microfilm Reel I, document 1013.

⁴⁶ Robert Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.138.

⁴⁷ Race, "The Origins of the Second Indochina War", op.cit., p.371. Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., p.159 states that the National Revolutionary Movement had as many as 100 members in each village in the Delta and that one of their duties was to inform on the activities of "ex-Viet Minh cadres". Pearce also describes the extension of the inter-family group (lien gia tuong tro),

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A Party history of this period confirms these views concerning the timing and effectiveness of the RVN's pacification efforts: "[t]he enemy started this [pacification] program at the beginning of 1956, but the enemy did not succeed in oppressing the rural areas until the middle of 1958".⁴⁸ Yet the Party too was held to blame: "as for the form of struggle the [Nam Bo Regional] Committee sometimes put too much emphasis on maintaining the struggle's legal position and for this reason in some areas the [political struggle] activities of the movement lost their revolutionary meaning".⁴⁹

After mid-1958 the political movement "gradually shifted from a strong to a weak position". Cadres had great difficulty in initiating action and "[t]he movement demanding social welfare and democratic rights became sporadic and uncoordinated".⁵⁰ According to Ton Vy,

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a population control device which grouped together members of a family and made them collectively responsible for all the other members. According to Scigliano, "Another of the government's political efforts to contain Communism has been its attempt to organize the Vietnamese people into neighbourhood-control groups. This program, called the Mutual Aid Family Group (Lien Gia Tuong Tro), is another device borrowed from the Viet Minh, though it appears to have roots in traditional Vietnamese administration". Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., pp.169-170. Instructions concerning the inter-family group, dated March 13, 1956, may be found in appendix A of John D. Donoghue and Vo Hong Phuc, My Thuan: The Study of a Delta Village in South Vietnam (Saigon: Michigan State University Vietnam Advisory Group, May 1961). A copy of this report may be located in the Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

⁴⁸ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.9.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.33.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.23 and 19 respectively.

"[w]hile the popular movement in the countryside, subjected to repeated attacks by the puppet regime, suffered setbacks in some places [during the months January-July 1958], the workers and other labouring people in the cities availed themselves of the enemy's demagogy to extend and better organize their legal struggle".⁵¹ The "legal" political struggle movement in the cities survived for another three months until "a particularly harsh repression ... caused some temporary setback to the worker movement".⁵²

III. VIOLENCE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

A. Non-Party Activity

With the destruction and scattering of the various sect forces in 1956 by the ARVN, rural Viet-Nam in 1957-58 witnessed the continuation of low-level armed violence which had no apparent political direction. This activity continued simultaneously with acts of political violence directed against the RVN and its local administration by Party and sect forces who had definite political goals in mind. Non-political violence was carried out by a variety of groups who were in fact remnants of larger sect formations who turned to banditry to survive. In these conditions of unrest criminal gangs also emerged to take advantage of insecure conditions. Therefore in order to understand the events of this period and the role

⁵¹ Ton Vy, "The Workers' Struggle", op.cit., p.95.

⁵² Ibid., p.98.

played by the Party's armed forces it is important not to neglect various groupings which acted independently of Party control.

American military advisers serving in Viet-Nam estimated that a total of 7,000 sect forces rallied to the RVN during 1956 as a result of ARVN military operations.⁵³ American estimates of the total number of armed sect dissidents still active in Viet-Nam varied considerably: 850 in January 1957; 15,000 in April 1958 and "a few hundred" in May 1959.⁵⁴ Although the figures may be inaccurate due to the confused and complex situation in the countryside they are evidence that a distinction was being made between Communist guerrillas and other armed opponents of the Diem regime.

At the same time as these estimates were being prepared, a continual stream of sect soldiers rallied to the RVN as their situation deteriorated. During the first six months of 1958, for example, 2,000 individuals surrendered to the RVN.⁵⁵ Most of these "ralliers" came

⁵³ Military Assistance Advisory Group - Viet-Nam, Statement on MDAP, Non-NATO Countries (January 1957) quoted in "U.S. Perceptions of the Insurgency, 1954-1960", in United States - Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab 4, p.14.

⁵⁴ Ibid.; U.S. Department of State, Nature and Extent of the Communist Subversive Threat to the Protocol States of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos (April 3, 1958) and U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Prospects for North and South Vietnam, National Intelligence Estimate 63-59 (May 26, 1959) respectively, cited in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab 4, pp.14, 18 and 20.

⁵⁵ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Intelligence Report: The Outlook for North and South Vietnam (May 5, 1959), No.8008, p.10. A copy of this document was obtained by the author under the U.S. Freedom of Information Act.

over in small groups, although there were some notable exceptions. In June 1958 Nguyen Long Chau's notorious Binh Dan Cach Mang (Revolutionary People's Army) gave up its resistance to the Diem government.⁵⁶ In July and in September elements of four Hoa Hao battalions defected from their commander General Truong Kim Cu, and crossed over to the RVN.⁵⁷

Nevertheless armed formations continued to be active. General Cu, despite the defections of one-half of his force, managed to continue independent operations along the Cambodian border until 1962.⁵⁸ Various Hoa Hao

⁵⁶ Vietnam Press, "More Hoa Hao Surrender", The Times of Viet Nam (July 18, 1958), Vol.2, No.154, p.1; according to Nhan Dan (August 23, 1957), people in five villages in Chau Phu district of Chau Doc province were forced to sign a petition stating that the Nguyen Long Chau group was a "disguised Communist organization". See also the account in Hanoi Radio's broadcast in Vietnamese, 1200 GMT, of September 30, 1958. According to Ngo Trong Hieu, a close intimate of the Diem family and the RVN's Ambassador to Cambodia at this time, the Nguyen Long Chau sect was comprised of the most fanatic anti-imperialist and anti-communist and anti-Diemist elements of the Hoa Hao who changed political alignments with shifting circumstances; Interview with Ngo Trong Hieu in Saigon, July 5 and 18, 1972. Hieu also served as Secretary of State for Civic Action under Diem; after the November 1960 coup attempt Hieu took charge of unspecified duties with the police.

⁵⁷ Vietnam Press, "More Hoa Hao Surrender", The Times of Viet Nam (July 18, 1958), Vol.2, No.154, p.1; reports that 2 battalions rallied in Tan Chau district in An Giang. "Rebel Battalions Surrender", *ibid.*, (September 9, 1958), Vol.2, No.198, p.1; reports that two battalions surrendered at the Kinh Xuang military post in Tan An. See also: Hanoi Radio in Vietnamese, 1100 GMT, September 9, 1958.

⁵⁸ Bernard B. Fall, "Vietcong: Unseen Enemy in Vietnam", New Society (April 22, 1965) reprinted in Viet-Nam Witness, *op.cit.*, p.235; Falls identifies the unit as Truong Kim Cu's 104th Battalion.

units were similarly active such as the Phan Thanh Gian, Le Van Duyet and Le Loi battalions.⁵⁹

Quite distinct from these sect groups, which maintained the pretension of opposition to Diem, were the various armed gangs such as the Rung Xanh (Green Jungle) which operated in Binh Duong⁶⁰ and Bung Thay⁶¹ which was captured in December 1958. These gangs survived by carrying out robbery, extortion and murder.

An examination of Saigon press accounts reveals that there was an awareness that "bandits" and "pirates" were responsible for some of the rural violence. For example, in October 1957 "outlaw bandits" were blamed for an attack on a Caltex barge in the Mekong Delta, and "pirates" were reported to have plundered the My Hoi Dong market in Long Xuyen.⁶² In July 1958 "armed bandits" were involved in a shoot-out with a navy patrol on the Cat Lai river.⁶³ Other press accounts intimated that

⁵⁹ "Full Translation of the Government Communique", The Times of Viet Nam (June 27, 1958), Vol.2, No.136, pp.1 and 2. Fall, "Vietnam: Unseen Enemy in Vietnam", op.cit., p.235.

⁶⁰ "Vendetta Helps Clean Binh Duong Province of Feared Pirates", The Times of Viet Nam (March 5, 1958), Vol.2, No.48, p.1.

⁶¹ "Three Brigands Arrested After Seven Day's Man Hunting in Jungle", The Times of Viet Nam (December 18, 1958), Vol.2, No.281, p.2.

⁶² "Bandits Attacking Caltex Barge Arrested", The Times of Viet Nam (October 18, 1957), Vol.I, No.6, p.1; Vietnam News Agency, October 31, 1957 quotes reports from AFP.

⁶³ "Armed Gang Arrested On River", The Times of Viet Nam (July 8, 1958), Vol.2, No.146, p.1.

criminals were responsible. In December 1957 an attempt was made to steal the payroll at the Phuoc Hao rubber plantation and in July 1958 ten armed men attacked a rice plant in Can Tho.⁶⁴ In both cases the authorities were unable to provide the press with suggestions as to who was responsible.

It would seem reasonable to assume that many of these acts of violence were undertaken by criminal gangs and sect remnants for purposes of profit and survival. In these cases, where sources of cash, food and arms were attacked, and in the absence of other motives, a distinction between the two groups - sects - criminals - seems irrelevant.

B. The Sects and the Party

One must place the various sect groups who chose to remain in confrontation with the Diem regime for political reasons in an entirely different category. These groups opposed their absorption into ARVN and the dismantling of their fiefs; they resorted to armed force against the Diem government and lost.

As early as 1955, when military forces loyal to Diem expelled the Binh Xuyen from Saigon, a force of men under Vo Van Mon sought refuge in War Zone D and in the Plain of Reeds (Dong Thap Muoi).⁶⁵ In neighbouring Tay Ninh,

⁶⁴ "A Large Group of Pirates Attack and Destroy French Rubber Plantation North of Saigon", *ibid.* (January 7, 1958), Vol.II, NO.5, p.2; "Armed Attack on Rice Plant", *ibid.* (July 14, 1958), Vol.2, No.150, p.1.

⁶⁵ Ta Xuan Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet Nam", *op.cit.*, p.21.

two understrength Cao Dai battalions under the command of Lt. Col. Manh and Major Le Hoang ensconced themselves in the Duong Minh Chau base area.⁶⁶ The following year a Hoa Hao unit of 300 men, led by the son of Huynh Phu So, settled down near Can Tho.⁶⁷ All three sect groups were soon contacted by underground Party cadres who overcame past enmity by offering to help these units in their fight for survival. Throughout 1956 Party cadres contacted other opponents of the Diem regime and attempted to win them over, especially now demobilised and unemployed members of sect units which had initially rallied to the RVN.

The Party's objectives seem clear: either gain control of armed sect units and use them to support Party programs or form a working relationship with independent sect units and support their efforts against Diem. In October 1956, for example, combined Binh Xuyen and Cao Dai units were successfully employed in attacks at Dau Tieng in Thu Dau Mot and Ben Cui in Bien Hoa.⁶⁸

In December 1956 the Party moved to unite the opposition groups. A mass revolt of prisoners inside Bien Hoa jail was instigated. They seized a quantity of arms, escaped and arrived safely in Zone D and in the Plain of Reeds after eluding their pursuers.⁶⁹ Later that month

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid. According to Donnell, only some 5% - 10% of all Cao Dai officers initially integrated into the ARVN were retained as commissioned officers; "Politics in South Viet-Nam", op.cit., p.425.

⁶⁸ Ta Xuan Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began", op.cit., p.22.

⁶⁹ Vietnam News Agency in English, 0600 GMT, December 15, 1956.

various dissident leaders gathered in the Plain of Reeds to announce the unification of their armed forces under a joint general staff. This new alliance took the name Cao Thien Hoa Binh, an acronym formed from its constituent members: Cao Dai, Thien Chua [Catholics], Hoa Hao and Binh Xuyen.⁷⁰ On operations, whether separately or in combination, each sect unit continued to bear its own designation as well as that of the new alliance.⁷¹

The Cao Thien Hoa Binh soon made contact with Vietnamese exiles in Cambodia and France and tapped their financial resources.⁷² It is tempting to speculate that the renewal of opposition to Diem may have sparked other exile groups into action, such as the Dai Viet National Salvation Movement which formed six months later. In early 1957, for example, approaches were made to individuals serving in sect units which had been integrated into the ARVN to enlist their support in a coup attempt against Diem. The plot failed when the would-be assassin missed his mark. A purge of elements within the ARVN suspected of disloyalty followed.⁷³

⁷⁰ Viet Hong, "Vai Net Ve Dau Tranh Vo Trang Va Luc Luong Vo Trang o Nam Bo Truoc Cuoc Dong Khoi 1959-1960", op.cit., p.43.

⁷¹ Hiliare du Berrier, "Report from Saigon", American Mercury (September 1958), Vol.87, No.416, pp.43-51, especially p.50.

⁷² Viet Hong, "Vai Net Ve Dau Tranh Vo Trang va Luc Luong Vo Trang o Nam Bo Truoc Cuoc Dong Khoi 1959-1960", op.cit., p.43.

⁷³ du Berrier, "Report from Saigon", op.cit., p.47; and Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese, 0440 GMT, February 27, 1957 and ibid. in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, February 27, 1957.

A similar link-up between the Party and sect dissidents occurred in mid-1957 in Ca Mau province. There two sect soldiers organized a military force to resist local Diemist officials. According to Nguyen Tu Quang, a party cadre in Ca Mau at that time:

These men [Dinh Thien Hoang and Ngo Van So] had no particular political or ideological outlook ... but since their local leaders had sold out to Diem and they could not stand what was going on, Hoang and So organized some of the rank-and-file members of the sects and together with some other militants who had fled their villages because of repression, they formed two resistance battalions ... (emphasis added).⁷⁴

In the various Party-controlled base areas, which dated back to the anti-French Resistance,⁷⁵ Party cadres organized the sect units and provided them with military and political training as well as instruction in the etiquette of people's war. American intelligence sources were well aware of what was going on, according to one State Department analysis:

⁷⁴ Burchett, Vietnam Will Win! op.cit., p.120.

⁷⁵ Zasloff, Origins of the Insurgency, op.cit., pp.17-18. A cadre active in Saigon mentions a base in the mountains called 100-K to which he went in 1956. According to Pike: "Six former major Viet Minh bases remained areas of extreme insecurity over which Diem was never able to exert firm civilian control; these formed the nuclei for what were to become the NLF's "liberated areas" ... that is, the Mao-Giap safe base from which the NLF could operate. These were Do Xa, Mang Kim in Quang Ngai province; To Hap in the mountains behind Nha Trang city; Duong Minh Chau in northern Tay Ninh province along the Cambodian border; Zone D chiefly in Phuoc Thanh and Binh Duong provinces just north of Saigon; Ban O Qua in Kien Phong province in the Mekong delta; and Kien Lam in An Xuyen province in the far south". Pike, Viet Cong, op.cit., p.80. See R.J. O'Neill, Vietnam Task (Melbourne: Cassell Australia, 1968), p.7 for a map of War Zones C and D as well as the Iron Triangle.

MAP 8-1

COMMUNIST BASE AREAS IN EASTERN NAM BO



SOURCE: Robert J. O'Neill, Vietnam Task: The 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, 1966/67 (Melbourne: Cassell Australia, 1968), p.7.

The Communists are now believed to be actively cultivating the remnants of the Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, and Binh Xuyen dissident bands, dispersed by GVN [RVN] security forces in 1955. As many as 1500 armed non-Communist dissidents are believed still hiding in bands of various size in the delta region south of Saigon, the Plaine des Joncs, along the Cambodian border and northwest of Saigon. Through the years, the weapons of these outlaw bands have deteriorated, and ammunition has run low. The Communists are believed providing many of these bands with both assistance and guidance, in return for support or at least lip service to DRV aims.⁷⁶

The Party's attempts to win over various sect groups was a continuous affair. As late as September 1957 the Tan An province committee, located adjacent to the Cambodian frontier and the Plain of Reeds, instructed subordinates, "to win over the progressive armed forces of the sects along the border to establish a situation which is favorable to ourselves".⁷⁷ The process of "winning over" the sects involved introducing Party members directly into the sect ranks as well as activating Party-controlled units to cooperate with the sect forces. According to one Party account:

Because of the conflict between religious sects and My-Diem, the Party planted a number of cadres among the dissident forces and activated armed units equipped with weapons we had hidden.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ U.S. Department of State, Nature and Extent of the Communist Subversive Threat to the Protocol States of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos (April 3, 1958), op.cit., p.18.

⁷⁷ Long An province committee, "So l/HT" (No.1/Flash) in Jeffrey Race, compiler, Vietnamese Materials, Microfilm Reel I, document 1008, pp.1-3. "HT" is probably an abbreviation for the Vietnamese "hoa toc" meaning an urgent message. It could also stand for "huan thi" meaning an instruction.

⁷⁸ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.22.

The reactivated Party units, styled themselves the "Vietnamese Liberation Army" (Quan Doi Giai Phong Viet Nam) or "Vietnamese People's Liberation Movement" (Phong Trao Giai Phong Nhan Dan Viet Nam).⁷⁹ The newly formed sect alliance appears to have maintained a low-profile until the final quarter of 1957 at which time a marked rise in rural violence was noticeable. Prior to then only sporadic clashes were reported and it is unclear which sect units took the initiative. In February 1957 the ARVN's ammunition dump and barracks at Go Vap was

⁷⁹ Cf. Bo Tu Lenh Giai Phong Quan Viet Nam [High Command of the Vietnamese Army of Liberation], "Tai Lieu Quan Nhu Tai Chanh Nam 1957" (A Document on Military Supplies and Finance for the Year 1957) (May 19, 1957), pp.1-4 in Race, Vietnamese Materials, Microfilm Reel I, document 1006; and Hanh Chanh Giai Phong Khu Vuc [Administration - Special Liberated Zone]. "Chi Thi So 17/CTKV" (Directive No.17/CTKV) in *ibid.*, Microfilm Reel I, document 1007. "CTKV" is probably an abbreviation of the Vietnamese "chi thi khu vuc" meaning "area/zone directive". The latter document makes reference to the "Phong Trao Giai Phong Nhan Dan Viet Nam". Republic of Vietnam, Violations of the Geneva Agreements by the Viet-Minh Communists (July 1959), *op.cit.*, p.20 states, "But after the rebellious sects had been successively reduced to a harmless state, these elements [Communist stay-behinds] were compelled, in spite of themselves, to remove their mask. They have united under a single command; in order to impress the people and to lead astray the opinion [sic], they have named themselves the 'Army of National Liberation'". MAAG-Vietnam in its Country Statement of July 15, 1957 commented: "... the Communists have been forming 'front' organizations to influence at least portions of all anti-government minorities. Some of these organizations are militant, some political. An example of the former is the 'Vietnamese People's Liberation Movement Forces', a military unit composed of ex-Cao Dai, ex-Hoa Hao, ex-Binh Xuyen, escaped political prisoners, and Viet Cong cadres", reprinted in "U.S. Perceptions of the Insurgency", *op.cit.*, p.16.

twice attacked, for example.⁸⁰ In April two French rubber plantations experienced brief hit-and-run raids.⁸¹ During that same month a car was ambushed on the Saigon-Da-Lat road.⁸² This relative lull coincided with the withdrawal of ARVN units for American-styled re-training described in chapter seven.

Although the identity of the perpetrators of the earlier incidents remained unknown, such was not the case with subsequent armed attacks. Party historians of this period specifically mention the successes of "resistance forces" [presumably Party cadres, ex-Viet-Minh Front veterans and sect units] in attacking Trai Be in September 1957 and Lo Than in December.⁸³ In October eighty members of the so-called "nationalist resistance forces" attacked a unit of the RVN's Self-

⁸⁰ Vietnam News Agency in Vietnamese morse to Vietnam, 0900 GMT, March 9, 1957; and *ibid.* in English morse to Vietnam, 0900 GMT, March 9, 1957.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, English morse to Southeast Asia, 0516 GMT, April 13, 1957.

⁸² *Ibid.*, in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0516 GMT, April 13, 1957.

⁸³ Ta Xuan Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet Nam", *op.cit.*, p.23; Viet Hong, "Vai Net Ve Dau Tranh Vo Trang va Luc Luong Vo Trang o Nam Bo Truoc Cuoc Dong Khoi 1959-1960", *op.cit.*, pp.47-48. As we shall note later both authors erroneously date an attack on Minh Thanh in Thu Dau Mot in 1957 (August 10th) rather than in 1958.

Defense Corps stationed at a military post in Phu Long district of Binh Duong province.⁸⁴

One of the most spectacular incidents of this period occurred on October 22, 1957 when two hotels serving as billets for MAAG personnel and the USIS Library were the subject of bomb attacks.⁸⁵ Thirteen Americans and five Vietnamese were wounded as a result. RVN spokesmen placed the blame for the attacks on a "Communist terrorist" group and stated that the objective was to embarrass the RVN before the Columbo Plan delegates then meeting in Saigon.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Voice of the National Salvation Movement, 0001 GMT, October 25, 1957; the attack took place on 16 October. It is unclear whether the Party was involved in this attack. The Voice of the NSM eschewed violence and had previously condemned the October bombing of MAAG billets. With respect to this attack the radio merely stated that it was a continuation of the civil war begun earlier by Diem. Both Linh and Hong (see footnote 83 above) state that an attack took place in Dau Tieng district of Thu Dau Mot (Binh Duong) province on October 10, 1957.

⁸⁵ Vietnam Press, "Two Explosions in Saigon Causing 15 Casualties", The Times of Viet Nam (October 23, 1957), Vol.1, No.20, p.2; dispatch by Greg MacGregor from Saigon in The New York Times (October 23, 1957), pp.1 and 6; and dispatch by Russell Baker from Washington in ibid. (October 23, 1957), p.6. For Hanoi's first reaction see: Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0440 GMT, October 24, 1957.

⁸⁶ Vietnam Press, "President Ngo Dinh Diem Blames the Communists for Recent Bombings", The Times of Viet Nam (October 25, 1957), Vol.1, No.22, p.1; Diem's view was shared by U.S. State Department, see the remarks of press spokesman Lincoln White quoted by Russell Baker in The New York Times (October 23, 1957), p.6. Two later accounts by semi-official Hanoi sources place the incident in 1958 and claim that 13 Americans were killed rather than wounded; Viet Hong in fact cites The Pentagon Papers as compiled by Neil Sheehan as his source. Fox Butterfield's summary, "Origins of the Insurgency in South Vietnam", states, in fact, the bombings took place on October 22, 1957 and that thirteen Americans were wounded not killed;

cont'd

None of the attacks launched by "resistance forces" in 1957 can compare to two major attacks undertaken in 1958. The first occurred on January 4th when a battalion-sized unit (estimates range from 300-500 men) seized the Minh Thanh rubber plantation in Thu Dau Mot after a mortar barrage.⁸⁷

Members of the attacking force, described later as "a cocktail of sect remnants and Communist officers",⁸⁸ seized 1.5 million piastres from the manager's office, subjected the plantation work force to a political lecture and set fire to the office buildings before making off in five vehicles which they stole from the plantation. Among the topics stressed in the political lecture were:

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Sheehan, compiler, The Pentagon Papers, op.cit., p.75. Viet Hong writes that the High Command of the Revolutionary Forces (Bo Chi Huy Luc Luong Cach Mang) carried out the attack to overcome the fear and admiration held by certain Vietnamese for the American advisers, see: "Vai Net Ve Dau Tranh Vo Trang va Luc Luong Vo Trang o Nam Bo Truoc Cuoc Dong Khoi 1959-1960", op.cit., p.48. Ta Xuan Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet Nam", op.cit., p.23 also places the date of the incident in 1958. He ascribes responsibility for the raid to "the people's armed forces".

⁸⁷ "Rebellion Against My-Diem", United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967, op.cit., IV.A.5. Tab 2, pp.20-21, footnote 56, which cites a variety of CIA and National Security Council sources, gives an estimate of 300-400 for the attacking force; Vietnam News Agency in English, 0552 GMT, January 9, 1958, which cites AFP, gives a figure of 500; this agrees with estimates provided in the South, see: "A Large Group of Pirates Attack and Destroy French Rubber Plantation North of Saigon", The Times of Viet Nam (January 7, 1958), Vol.II, NO.5, p.2.

⁸⁸ "While Viet Nam Battalions Track Down Minh Thuan [sic] Intruders In Dense Jungle, Work Resumes on Raided Rubber Plantation", ibid. (January 9, 1958), Vol.II, NO.7, pp.1 and 6. Various reports suggested that the attackers might have been Lien Minh Cao Dai or remnants of the Binh Xuyen. It is known that one Binh Xuyen battalion was active with Party forces during this time.

American responsibility for Viet-Nam's continued partition, developments in the North, a condemnation of life in the South and a request that taxes be redirected from the RVN to the guerrillas.⁸⁹

Seven months later "resistance units" totalling perhaps as many as 500 attacked another rubber plantation in Thu Dau Mot province, leading RVN and American observers to conclude that one purpose of the attacks was to disrupt the Republic of Viet-Nam's economy.⁹⁰ In a rerun of the earlier raid, the attackers seized a million piastres in cash and then set about systematically destroying the power plant, offices, storage sheds and processing facilities. On this occasion the attackers failed to make a perfect escape and thirty of their number were killed by ARVN forces. As a result of this encounter and the later capture of two raiders it was established

⁸⁹ "A Large Group of Pirates Attack and Destroy French Rubber Plantation North of Saigon", op.cit., p.2; and "While Viet Nam Battalions Track Down Minh Thuan Intruders in Dense Jungle, Work Resumes on Raided Rubber Plantation", op.cit., pp.1 and 6.

⁹⁰ "38 Killed, As Pirates Attack Rubber Plantation", ibid. (August 12, 1958), Vol.II, No.175, p.1; and Associated Press dispatch from Saigon in The New York Times (August 12, 1958), p.11; and UPI dispatch from Dau Tieng in The New York Times (August 18, 1958), p.5. Inexplicitly both Ta Xuan Linh and Viet Hong (see footnote 83 above) date this well-documented attack in 1957; see: Vietnam Courier (March 1974), No.22, p.23 and Nghien Cuu Lich Su (March-April 1974), No.155, p.47. Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid, op.cit., pp.38-40 provides an example of Communist propaganda directed at undermining a tilapia fish programme.

that the attacking unit was a Binh Xuyen force under the command of Bay Mon, an alias used by Vo Van Mon.⁹¹

These two attacks were unique when compared with other forms of rural violence then in progress, a fact not unnoticed in U.S. intelligence assessments. For example, a national intelligence estimate of May 1959 stated: "[t]he guerrillas are able to marshal a force of several hundred men for major hit-and-run raids, as they demonstrated twice during 1958".⁹² The estimate went on to describe other forms of violence which we shall treat in the following section. It is important to note that in the Party's view

⁹¹ "Plantation Attackers Fleeing Westwards", The Times of Viet Nam (August 13, 1958), Vol.II, No.176, pp.1 and 2; and "Jeeps Recovered As Pursuit Continues", ibid. (August 14, 1958), Vol.2, No.177, pp.1 and 4. Vo Van Mon (also known as: Bay Mon, Vo Thanh Mon and Vo Dang Liem) has been identified as the commander of the Cao Thien Hoa Binh by du Berrier, Background to Betrayal, op.cit., p.150. His official NFL biography states: "After the signing of the 1954 Geneva Agreements, he became Commander-in-Chief [of] the Binh Xuyen troops and carried on energetic resistance against the U.S.-Diem scheme to annihilate the opponents of their regime. Thanks to the people's support he was able to defend himself, break through encirclement of the enemy forces and inflict serious losses on them in Phuoc Tho, Long Thanh, Minh Thanh, Ben Cui, Dau Tieng, Tower Number 2, Phuoc Thanh and other places". (emphasis added). Personalities of the South Vietnam Liberation Movement, op.cit., p.29. Ben Cui was attacked as a diversion to the main attack on Minh Thanh, see: "Jeeps Recovered As Pursuit Continues", op.cit., pp.1 and 4. According to the CIA, "By at least 1958 Bay Mon's forces were thought to be completely under Viet Cong control"; U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Memorandum, (September 22, 1965), op.cit., Appendix, p.A-53. Mon later became a member of the NFL's Central Committee.

⁹² United States, Central Intelligence Agency, Prospects for North and South Vietnam, National Intelligence Estimate 63-59 (May 26, 1959) in United States - Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967, op.cit., Book 10, p.1193. Cf. Hanoi Radio in Vietnamese, 0100 GMT, September 18, 1958.

[t]he anti-dictatorship armed forces in the years 1956-1957 actually became the prop of the people's struggle. In return, they enjoyed effective help from the people who provided them with food and manpower, enabling them to survive and develop. The armed forces of the religious sects, to enhance their reputation among the population and to break the encirclement by the Saigon army, launched a number of operations against military positions and political and economic centres of the Saigon regime around the resistance bases.⁹³

Starting in late 1957 and in early 1958, as ARVN forces returned to the tasks of rural pacification, and as the ACDC intensified, the momentum built up in 1957 began to slow down. Eventually the weight of Diem's political and military efforts achieved success and "the resistance army of the religious sects dwindled into a mere token force".⁹⁴

C. The Party and Its Armed Forces

Throughout the period 1954-60 American intelligence estimates placed the strength of Communist armed forces at between 5-8,000 of whom no more than 2,000 were ever considered active. Table 8-2 sets out in chronological order the various estimates produced at this time.

According to Pentagon analysts:

What U.S. intelligence focused on in the immediate aftermath of Geneva were the remnants of the Viet Minh military forces following regroupment. These, whatever their strength, probably represented only a fraction of the numbers of former Viet Minh in active

⁹³ Ta Xuan Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet Nam", op.cit., p.21.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

opposition to the GVN after 1956, and apparently did not reflect the total numbers of armed dissidents from 1957 onward, nor the locally recruited political and logistic apparatus which supported the Viet Cong "armed propaganda teams", or guerrilla bands.⁹⁵

TABLE 8-2

AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES OF ARMED COMMUNIST STRENGTH IN SOUTH VIET-NAM, 1955-59

<u>Date of Estimates:</u>	<u>Source:</u>	<u>Estimate:</u>
11 October 1955	National Intelligence Estimate	10,000
18 May 1956	Weekly Intelligence Digest	6-8,000
17 July 1956	Weekly Intelligence Digest	5,000
10 August 1956	Weekly Intelligence Digest	5-7,000
January 1957	MAAG Country Statement	1,370
15 July 1957	MAAG Country Statement	1,5000
3 April 1958	Department of State Intelligence Estimate	1,100 - 1,400
18 July 1958	Weekly Intelligence Digest	1-2,000
19 December 1958	Weekly Intelligence Digest	2,000
26 May 1959	National Intelligence Estimate	2,000

SOURCE: United States - Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967, Book 2, "U.S. Perceptions of the Insurgency, 1954-1960", pp.9, 11, 13, 16 and 25. Estimates for this period, states a Pentagon analyst, are subject to great uncertainty. The numbers in the above table should be treated as order of magnitude. The American estimates provide no explanation for the large drop between August 1956 and January 1957. Paramilitary groups may have been included in the former estimates. Later estimates focused on active Communists. Otherwise the estimates reflect the success of the Diem government's anti-Communist suppression.

⁹⁵ "U.S. Perceptions of the Insurgency, 1954-1960", op.cit., p.26, these are the words of the anonymous analyst.

This oversight by American observers was a serious error. Although the same analysts argued that the phenomenal growth of the "Viet Cong" in 1960 could be explained by previously low estimates, this is only partly correct. Insofar as American intelligence specialists focused on main force or regular troop strength they were probably accurate in the impression that force levels remained static. Their error lay in not focusing on all three levels of Communist military organization (main force, local force and guerrilla force) and noting the expansion in size of the latter.

With respect to military forces during this period, the Party carried out two distinct programmes, in addition to their cooperation with the sects. One programme aimed at laying the foundations for a future expansion in armed strength. This involved the creation of village self-defence forces to ward off ARVN attacks. The other programme aimed at maintaining and developing armed propaganda units at provincial level who were to carry out the "extermination of traitors campaign" (tru gian). All types of armed forces were developed to create an environment in which the political struggle movement could grow in accordance with the broad guidelines contained in "Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam".

By 1959 the Party found itself, after a brief period of respite, in another period of decline. In a post mortem on the policies pursued during this period (1957-58) the Nam Bo Committee was criticised for not understanding the proper role of armed force in carrying out a national democratic revolution. According to this later review:

In parts of 1957, '58 and '59 our armed forces did not obtain any good results for our movement. On the contrary, when our armed forces appeared the enemy tightly controlled the people and hunted down our forces. At that time [1957-58] our policy was to avoid fighting in order to protect [read preserve] our armed forces. This situation made the people anxious. We did not launch any attacks because we operated under the name of the religious sects and therefore our influence [with the people] was not widespread....

Moreover, it was the policy of the Regional Committee to restrict armed activity Because of this our armed forces were unable to support the [political struggle] movement. Nor could our armed forces develop as they had no operational guidelines [phuong cham hoat dong]. For that reason their very survival was threatened. The Regional Committee's operational guidelines at that time were as follows: "cause [the enemy's] lower echelon (administrators, spies ...) to shrink [from their assignments] so as to make [the enemy's] high echelons lack vigilance", "politics is no more important than military affairs", "propaganda is more important than making war", etc.... and even "the main thing is the present and the past" for examining the re-strengthening of the armed forces. These operational guidelines greatly limited our armed forces. Therefore some of our people and cadres were of the opinion that "not having armed forces was better than having armed forces".⁹⁶

Other captured documents make it clear that though the expansion in size of the armed forces began in 1957, it was not until two years later that the mission became one of national liberation.⁹⁷ Prior to 1959 the Party developed armed forces for self-defence purposes and for the conduct of the tru gian campaign (see below). During

⁹⁶ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.22.

⁹⁷ Republic of Vietnam, Ministry of National Defence, Study of the Activation and Activities of R, op.cit., p.47.

1957 in what appears to have been a policy embracing all of South Viet-Nam, squads and platoons were created in Party-controlled base areas in Trung Bo (the Highlands, Binh Dinh and Quang Ngai), in eastern Nam Bo (War Zone D), in central Nam Bo (Dinh Tuong and Long An) and in western Nam Bo (Ca Mau). These basic organizations were expanded in numbers to company and then battalion strength, the first of which appears to have been organized in mid-1958 in War Zone D.⁹⁸ Table 8-3 sets out a rough "order of battle" for this period based mainly on Party sources.

TABLE 8-3

COMMUNIST ARMED FORCES IN SOUTH VIET-NAM: ORDER OF BATTLE,
1957-58

<u>Area:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
Eastern Nam Bo ^a	1957: two companies, C40 and C45, formed including Binh Xuyen troops; 1958: three companies Mid-1958: a battalion formed in Zone D End 1958: elements of two battalions
Central Nam Bo ^b	August 1957: 4th Battalion located in Dinh Tuong province (element thereof); November 1957: 12th Company, 506th Battalion located in Long An Party sources claim 16 squads in Long An
Western Nam Bo ^c	1957: two resistance battalions formed in Ca Mau 1958: 3 companies identified in U Minh area, other sources give 6 companies in U Minh

⁹⁸ Ta Xuan Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet Nam", op.cit., p.22.

TABLE 8-3 continued

<u>Area:</u>	<u>Description:</u>
Interzone v ^d	2 battalions
Highlands ^e	3 companies

A company, dai doi, varied in size from 100-200 men; a battalion tieu doi, varied in size between 300-350 men. Both designations were rough classifications as the battle of order varied widely.

SOURCES:

^a Australian Army Training Information Letter, "Background Paper to the Vietcong in Military Region 7", 14/1970 (November 1970), p.4.14; Robert J. O'Neill, Vietnam Task, p.8; Tinh Binh Nam Bo, p.22; Ta Xuan Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet-Nam", pp.22-23 reports "about two battalions" of the Cao Thien Hoa Binh.

^b Tinh Binh Nam Bo, p.22; "Interrogation in 1958 of a prisoner who had been active in the 'Resistance' since 1945 until his capture by GVN forces in 1956", Working Paper Item 12, p.14 which includes comments by "headquarters" (i.e. the CIA station in Viet-Nam); Government of the Republic of Vietnam, Violations of the Geneva Agreements by the Viet-Minh Communists (1959), p.108; Republic of Viet-Nam, Ministry of National Defence, Joint General Staff, J2, Study of the Activation and Activities of R, p.23; and Jeffrey Race, War Comes to Long An, p.87.

^c Wilfred Burchett, Viet-Nam Will Win!, p.120; Republic of Vietnam, Ministry of National Defence, Study of the Activation and Activities of R, p.23; Republic of Vietnam, Violations of the Geneva Agreements, p.20; and Ta Xuan Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet-Nam", p.22.

^d Republic of Vietnam, Violations of the Geneva Agreements, p.20.

^e Tinh Binh Nam Bo, p.37.

There were various problems associated with these developments. Despite the fact that the Party controlled certain base areas which were kept out of RVN control, these do not appear to have been capable of supporting battalion-sized units at that time.⁹⁹ In order to cope with this, the Party dispersed its forces when not in operation.¹⁰⁰ Although it has often been asserted that the Party left equipment, weapons and ammunition cached throughout South Viet-Nam at the time of regroupment,¹⁰¹ and indeed ARVN forces appear to have been successful in locating many of them,¹⁰² the lack of weapons and ammunition at this time proved an inhibiting factor in the growth of the Party's armed forces. The Party did rely on "weapons

⁹⁹ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.37; Bo Tu Lenh Giai Phong Quan Viet Nam, "Tai Lieu Quan Nhu Tai Chnah Nam 1957", op.cit., outlines the financial burdens of maintaining these forces.

¹⁰⁰ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.37.

¹⁰¹ See for example, U.S. Department of State, A Threat to the Peace, op.cit., Part One, p.3; and Rodger Swearingen and Hammond Rolph, Communism in Vietnam, (Chicago: American Bar Association, 1967), pp.36-38.

¹⁰² In the period from November 1956-October 1957 the RVN claimed to have captured the following equipment; "735 rifles, 176 light machine guns, 19 submachine guns, 59 machine guns, 52 mortars and 281 revolvers"; "President Ngo Dinh Diem Address At the Opening of the National Assembly: Achievements in all Fields", The Times of Viet Nam (October 8, 1957), Vol.I, No.7, p.1; Vietnam Press, "Important Stock of Ammunition Discovered in Tay Ninh", *ibid.* (December 13, 1957), Vol.I, No.63, p.1; According to the Republic of Vietnam's Violations of the Geneva Agreements by the Viet-Minh Communists (July 1959), pp.20-21, "As far as the Viet-Minh arms and munitions are concerned, the national authorities, from September 1954 to June 1959, discovered 3,561 dumps of arms and munitions of which 303 of the most important, found scattered in the following provinces, have been brought to the attention of the International Commission for Supervision and Control".

we had hidden" to build up some of its forces; but it also had to assault ARVN posts to secure a sufficient supply. Ta Xuan Linh has written, for example:

After those resounding exploits [described in section two above], the revolutionary armed units were supplied with more and better arms and equipment. With their assistance in cadres and armaments, Bien Hoa, Thu Dau Mot and Tay Ninh provinces founded their own armed units [after August 1958].¹⁰³

By late 1958 the Party had made sufficient progress in developing bases to support armed units that a "Command of the People's Armed Forces" was set up in western Nam Bo to coordinate operations throughout southern Viet-Nam with the Cao Thien Hoa Binh General Staff.¹⁰⁴ Although the sects had "dwindled into a mere token force" by that time, they still managed "to muster their remaining force of about two battalions composed of the most determined persons ... in a resistance base in Eastern Nam Bo ..."¹⁰⁵ There Zones C and D had been built up "in all fields" and "(t)he Eastern part of Nam Bo became the centre of the armed struggle".¹⁰⁶

D. Tru Gian: Extermination of Traitors

As we have noted previously one former Party member has stated that a secret directive accompanied "Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam" authorizing Party officials at the

¹⁰³ Ta Xuan Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet Nam", op.cit., p.23.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

province level to organize armed propaganda groups to carry out a programme of "extermination of traitors" or tru gian.¹⁰⁷ This programme, which probably began in mid-1957, was initially indistinguishable from other forms of rural violence, at least to RVN officials. By October of that year its broad outlines were apparent to outside observers¹⁰⁸ as underground Party cadres, organized in small, selected armed groups were systematically kidnapping and/or executing local RVN officials. The prime targets included village officials (headmen, registrars, chairman of liaison committees, notables, former notables), police and security personnel (notables in charge of security and village guards), RVN administrators (district and in some cases provincial level officials) and civilians working in semi-official positions (teachers, social workers, NRM and Can Lao cadres, members of malaria eradication teams).¹⁰⁹ Other forms of rural violence included small guerrilla raids on land development centres, (where dredges, tractors and other equipment were destroyed), rubber plantations, land reform and agricultural credit offices and local militia posts as well as hit-and-run

¹⁰⁷ Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., pp.82-83.

¹⁰⁸ Fall, "South Vietnam's Internal Problems", op.cit., pp.241-260.

¹⁰⁹ Turner, Vietnamese Communism, op.cit. pp.174-176; Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid, op.cit., p.40. The focus of the campaign is not hard to understand given the change in the functions of the village council and the absolute brutality accorded Communist suspects; for documentation on these points consult: Pearce, "Land Tenure and Political Authority", op.cit., pp.119-121 and Zasloff, Origins of the Insurgency, op.cit., p.10.

bombing attacks (such as occurred in October 1957 when a bomb wounded two plainclothes security men sitting in a Cholon cafe).¹¹⁰

According to a Party cadre:

The principal purpose of the "extermination of traitors" movement at that time [beginning in 1957, 1958 and 1959] was to protect the existence of the Party. Without exterminating the [government] hardcore elements, the Party apparatus could not have survived. A second purpose was to aid in the developing of the Party by creating fear in the enemy ranks and by creating faith among the masses in the skilled leadership of the revolution.¹¹¹

A Party history stated that since 1957 "armed propaganda forces [cac luc luong vo trang tuyen truyen] were activated to carry out propaganda tasks and to kill tyrants"¹¹² under the following guidelines (phuong cham):

1. politics is more important than military affairs
2. propaganda is more important than fighting
3. no one should observe our going, when we return no one should know
4. avoid making the situation worse
5. disperse our organization, be systematic, maintain secrecy.

It is impossible to determine with great precision the figures of the magnitude of the tru gian campaign, especially for 1957. In part this is due to the nature of

¹¹⁰ Fall, "Will South Vietnam Be Next?", op.cit.

¹¹¹ Race, "The Origins of the Second Indochina War", op.cit., p.369; and Zasloff, Origins of the Insurgency, op.cit., p.21 describes the effect of the ACDC on a cadre who worked in Saigon. A third reason might be advanced for the tru gian campaign: to win popular support for the Party.

¹¹² Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.37; I have translated "tru gian" in this passage as "to kill tyrants".

RVN "bookkeeping", in part this is also due to the very real problem of determining who instigated a particular act and for what purpose. As we have mentioned above, various types of rural violence were occurring simultaneously. Nevertheless, even when these difficulties are taken into account, it is possible to discern a systematic programme of violence directed against RVN government and administrative personnel. Both outside observers and semi-official Party sources are in agreement on this point. In 1958 Bernard Fall was one of the first Western observers to bring the tru gian campaign to public attention:

Guerrilla activities in South Viet-Nam during 1957 and 1958 no longer represent a last-ditch fight of dispersed sect or Communist rebel remnants. On the contrary they have taken on a pattern of their own which is quite different from that followed by the Viet Minh during the struggle against the French. While the wartime Viet-Minh forces generally limited themselves to the intimidation of the local administrators (village chiefs, notables) into a state of "positive neutrality", the new terrorists seek out the local police chiefs, security guards, village treasurers, and youth leaders and kill them in as spectacular a manner as possible. It would be pointless to describe here the hundreds of cases reported in detail in the Saigon press, but in general they document the fact that the objective of the rebels - gradual "insulation" of the central authorities from direct contact with the grass roots - was achieved.¹¹³

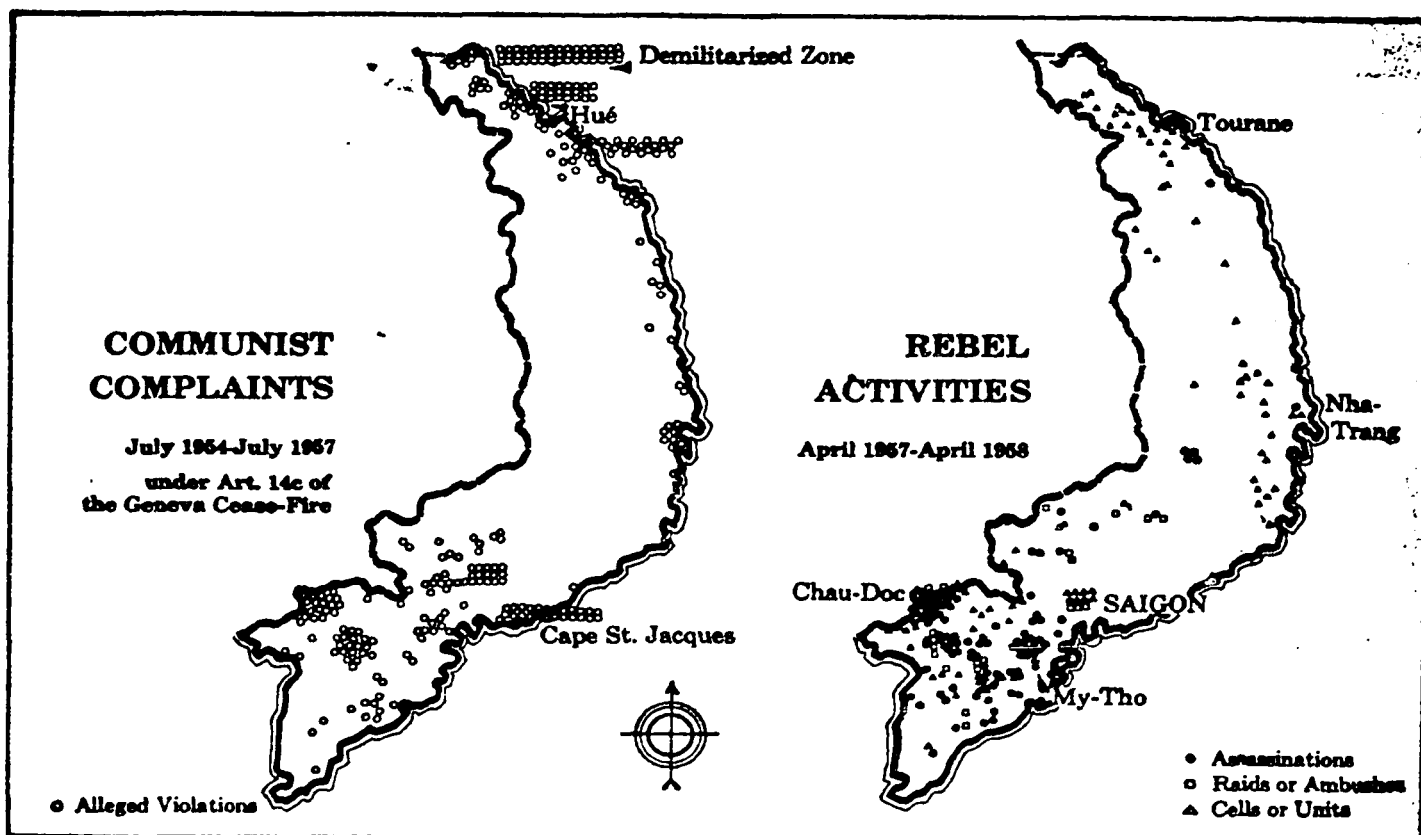
By way of confirmation Ta Xuan Linh has painted a picture of the Party underground reacting to the success of the various RVN security programmes by striking back. According to Linh:

Naturally, the more the people's self-defence organizations shrank, the more aggressive the cruel agents in the localities became and the

¹¹³ Fall, "South Viet-Nam's Internal Problems", op.cit., p.257.

MAP 8-2

A COMPARISON OF PAVN COMPLAINTS TO THE ICC WITH
THE LOCATION OF REBEL ACTIVITIES
(July 1954-April 1958)



SOURCE: Bernard B. Fall, Viet-Nam Witness 1953-66
(New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), p.172.

bloodier the crimes they perpetrated. More and more cadres were arrested and many more revolutionary organizations in the villages and hamlets were broken up. The South Vietnamese people call this 'the darkest period'. Though this was a major setback of the revolution, the revolutionaries and the people had learnt the hard way that to survive and wage an efficacious political struggle they could no longer limit themselves to purely defensive methods. The most urgent thing was to punish the cruel agents and tyrants the most reactionary forces in the countryside. Step by step the self-defense organizations were restored in the form of 'armed youth organizations' or militia and guerrilla groups. By 1958, the punishment of local tyrants and the destruction of the grassroots administration of the Diem regime has become a widely-extending mass movement. Some of the tyrannical agents at the top of the administration at district and even provincial levels were executed one after another. This encouraged the population and had a sobering effect on the enemies of the revolution.¹¹⁴

Estimates of the number of persons killed under this programme vary. Figures for 1957, ranging from 75 to 700, are least reliable,¹¹⁵ while estimates for 1958 (193 killed and 236 kidnapped) and 1959 (233 killed and 343 kidnapped) are probably closer to the mark despite the inaccuracies in gathering data of this kind.¹¹⁶ The

¹¹⁴ Ta Xuyen Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet Nam", op.cit., p.22. On September 14, 1957 Nguyen Trung Long, My Tho chief town administrative delegate (district chief of My Tho) was assassinated by a squad of ten men; "Nguyen Trung Long Murderers Arrested", The Times of Viet Nam (October 30, 1957), Vol.1, No.26, p.1; and Vietnam News Agency, September 29, 1957 in BBC, Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 5 (October 3, 1957), No.704, p.41.

¹¹⁵ Sheehan, compiler, The Pentagon Papers, op.cit., p.75 cites a figure of 75 killed and kidnapped; Buttinger, A Dragon Embattled, op.cit., Vol.2, p.982, cites RVN sources for the figure of 700.

¹¹⁶ "Special Report on Current Internal Security Situation" dispatch from the American Embassy in Saigon to the Department of State (March 7, 1960), No.278 in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 10, p.1273.

upper figure for 1957 apparently represents the total number of persons killed, whatever the cause, by groups labelled "Communist" by the RVN. The 1957 figures include both civilian (government officials and private citizens) and military (regular army, civil guard and self-defence corps) casualties. Victims of the Party's tru gian campaign were often found with a notice listing the reasons for execution attached to their corpses.¹¹⁷ This trademark should have enabled RVN authorities to make a distinction between deliberate political assassinations and deaths caused, perhaps inadvertently, as a result of guerrilla raids. However not all the victims of the Party's armed youth squads had death sentences attached to their bodies.

According to Douglas Pike the tru gian campaign began in mid-1957 with the execution of 470 persons "most of them during that year's October 'assassination in cadence'".¹¹⁸ This figure seems unduly large when compared

¹¹⁷ Republic of Vietnam, Violations of the Geneva Agreements by the Viet-Minh Communists, op.cit., p.108; Burchett, Inside Story of the Guerrilla War, op.cit., p.147, describes conditions around 1959. In an interview with Sao Nam, a Party cadre, Burchett quotes Nam as stating, "At first, the agents took little notice, actually stepped up their terror. Our group would pay another visit, usually with two variants of hand-written leaflets. On one was written the biography and crimes of the local agents and the death sentence by the local organ of the People's Self-Defense Force; the other was similar except it contained a pardon with a warning not to commit any more crimes. If we found the chief agent at home, we executed him, leaving the execution slip with the body and posting up a few copies. For the others, and for the chief agent in case he happened to be away, we posted up the pardon and warnings".

¹¹⁸ Douglas Pike, Viet Cong Use of Terror - A Study (Saigon: United States Mission in Vietnam, December 1967), p.3.

with subsequent years (see Table 8-4).¹¹⁹ According to RVN sources, only 174 murders were reported to the ICC for the period 1957-July 1959.¹²⁰ Figures gathered by the author from the public record equal 35 for the months

119 For example, if the number of persons killed during January-March 1958 (N = 72) in the American Embassy's telegram of March 7, 1960 (see footnote 116 above) are subtracted from an estimate provided by Bernard Fall of 400 village officials killed by March 1958, the figure of persons killed during 1957 (or earlier) equals $400 - 72 = 328$; see Fall, "Viet Nam in the Balance", op.cit., p.12. Fall, "South Viet-Nam's Internal Problems", op.cit., p.256 presents a map showing the locations of assassinations during the period April 1957-April 1958, a tabulation from this source made by this author reveals no more than 117 persons killed. President Diem put the total number of assassinations for the period November 1956-October 8, 1957 at 412 (45 troops, 23 Civil Guards, 40 militiamen, 8 social workers, 68 village notables and 228 private persons); "President Ngo Dinh Diem's Address At the Opening of the National Assembly", The Times of Viet Nam (October 8, 1957), Vol.I, No.7, p.1. Interestingly Buttinger's figure of 700 may almost be derived by adding Diem's figures for November 1956-October 1957 with Pike's figures for 1957, the majority of which he claimed occurred from October onwards ($412 + 470 = 882$); the excess may be due to overlap or to assassinations which took place during October-December 1956. In 1957 the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, Walter S. Ribertson was quoted as saying that assassinations had averaged 25/month for the last six months, or 150 deaths during the period April 1957-October 1957. Several explanations come to mind: (1) the variation in the figures may be due to differing systems of classifications which included civil and military victims of all types (2) that the Party opened its tru gian campaign with an intense burst of activity not equalled in 1958-59 or (3) that the figures for 1957, for a variety of reasons, are totally inaccurate. Cf. Roy Jumper, "Sects and Communism in South Vietnam", op.cit., p.93; Jumper and Normand, "Vietnam", op.cit., p.444.

120 Republic of Vietnam, Violations of the Geneva Agreements by the Viet-Minh Communists, op.cit., p.107, although a total of 174 is claimed the specific cases (10 servicemen, 28 civil guards, 65 village officials and 59 civilians) add up to only 162. Denis Warner, The Last Confucian, p.154 claims that the RVN reported 154 assassinations to the ICC for the period 1957-July 1959: 10 servicemen, 28 civil guards, 65 village officials and 51 civilians.

July-December 1957. When these are reconciled with a figure of 75 (killed and kidnapped) for the last quarter of 1957, the total number of killings does not exceed 106. Despite these discrepancies, most sources agree that a systematic campaign of political assassination was begun in 1957 and that it was intensified from October 1957 onwards.

During the following years RVN agencies improved their data collection and analysis techniques thus enabling American officials to form a clearer picture of Party-directed rural violence. Table 8-4 sets out the figures for the numbers of RVN officials killed or kidnapped during 1958 and 1959. The trend appears to be a slow steady rise (with monthly variations) in both categories. Killings averaged 16 a month in 1958 and 19 a month in 1959; kidnappings rose from an average of 19 per month in 1958 to 28 per month in 1959. The final months of 1959 (September-December 1959) show a marked increase above the average for both killings and abductions. The fate of those who were kidnapped is unknown. In 1973, for example, the RVN released a list of 220 officials (civil servants, village officials, police, self-defence personnel and government cadres) who were abducted by the Communists during the period 1954-60 and on whom the RVN still sought information.¹²¹

¹²¹ Viet Nam Cong Hoa (Republic of Viet Nam), Bang Ke Khai Tong So Can Bo va Thuong Dan Viet Nam Cong Hoa Bi Cong San Bat Giu Ke Tu 1954 (List of Civil Servants, Cadres and Civilians of the Republic of Viet Nam Abducted by the Communists Since 1954) (Saigon: Co So An Luat Trung Uong Phu Tong Uy Dan Van, March 23, 1973); these figures were tabulated from a list which included details on cases from 1954-1973. The yearly breakdown is as follows: 1954 (72); 1955 (15);

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Even more unreliable, except as gross indicators, have been U.S. attempts to record the number of "armed terrorist incidents". These would include skirmishes between guerrilla bands and RVN forces, and guerrilla initiated attacks and ambushes. According to this method less than 500 "Viet Cong incidents" occurred in 1957, around 500 took place in 1958 and the figure for 1959 jumped to 1,500.¹²² The tempo of conflict definitely picked up from 1958 as one estimate places the number of military casualties suffered by both sides at 1,000 in 1957 and 11,000 in 1959.¹²³ During 1958, according to another source, the RVN alone was suffering casualties at the rate of 40 government and 40 military personnel per month - or 960 for that year.¹²⁴

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1956 (11); 1957 (9); 1958 (19); 1959 (25) and 1960 (69). The absence of data for certain provinces indicates that the figures may be incomplete.

122 United States Mission in Vietnam, A Study - Viet Cong Use of Terror (Saigon: May 1966), pp.7-8; five categories of "Viet Cong incidents" are listed: (1) terror acts which are part of military or paramilitary assaults either offensive or defensive; (2) terror acts which are part of an ambush; (3) harassing villagers for coercive or intimidation purposes; (4) sabotage and subversive acts ... which involve use of violence and (5) acts directed against specific individuals, such as kidnappings, assassinations and executions.

123 Agence France Presse dispatch from Saigon carried by Agence Khmère de Presse on July 31, 1962, cited in Modelski, "The Viet Minh Complex", op.cit., p.198, footnote 36.

124 Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., p.138.

TABLE 8-4

AMERICAN ESTIMATES OF COMMUNIST-DIRECTED ASSASSINATIONS
AND ABDUCTIONS (1958-1959)

Month:	Assassinations		Kidnappings	
	1958	1959	1958	1959
January	10	10	25	17
February	36	11	5	6
March	26	31	43	21
April	17	13	12	16
May	13	16	5	22
June	21	5	15	15
July	11	16	24	22
August	7	12	18	11
September	8	22	24	34
October	15	29	26	42
November	8	35	19	89
December	21	33	20	48
First six months	123	86	105	97
Last six months	70	147	131	246
TOTAL	193	233	236	343
Average/month	16.0	19.4	19.7	28.6

SOURCE: "Special Report on Current Internal Security Situation" prepared by the U.S. Viet-Nam Country Team, dispatch No.278 (March 7, 1960) from the American Embassy in Saigon to the U.S. State Department in Washington, D.C. in United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967, Book 10, V.B.3., pp.1254-1275, especially p.1273. The report relied on monthly figures gathered from three sources: MAAG intelligence summary based on ARVN figures; MAAG summary report of Self-Defense Corps Activities based on figures supplied by the Self-Defense Corps; and "Statistics of Communist and Rebel Activity in South Viet-Nam" gathered by the CIA Station (CAS) based on figures provided by the "NPSS" an abbreviation not otherwise identified.

E. The Voice of the South Viet-Nam Liberation Front

On May 26, 1958, in the midst of the developments described in the above sections, a radio transmitter, billing itself as the "Voice of the South Viet Nam Liberation Front" took to the air. Broadcasts of this station were monitored throughout the year and during the first quarter of 1959. Thereafter, apparently, the station ceased operating.¹²⁵

The existence of the Voice of the South Viet Nam Liberation Front complicates our account of this period insofar as it suggests the possibility of a dissident Party faction in Nam Bo. The significance of this lies in the dispute over whether or not the Central Committee of the VWP was in control over the Party apparatus in Nam Bo and whether or not independent action by disgruntled cadres may have forced the Central Committee to endorse armed struggle earlier than planned.

¹²⁵ Broadcasts from this station were monitored for the period 26 May 1958 - 5 April 1959 by the U.S. Foreign Broadcast Information Service and by the BBC. The FBIS Daily Reports contain six reports: July 8, 18 and 31; August 4 and 25; and September 2. The BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 3, The Far East, recorded only three: May 26, 27 and 28. The RVN has made public reference to only one broadcast whose transcript is available: August 25 (its account bears no similarity to the FBIS version); all other broadcasts cited by the RVN and Carver cannot be located publicly; see: Republic of Vietnam, Violations of the Geneva Agreements by the Viet-Minh Communists, op.cit., pp.105 and 121-122; Carver, "The Faceless Viet Cong", op.cit., p.360. See also: Trager, Why Vietnam? op.cit., p.201.

Party documents acknowledge that certain cadres acted in violation of the Party's line but these same documents give the impression that such action was limited and soon brought under control. They make no reference to the Voice of the South Viet Nam Liberation Front.

For example:

The situation [in 1957-58] grew increasingly more difficult each day. The thoughts of Party members became very complex [i.e. confused; phuc tap]. Nearly all lacked confidence in the efficacy of political struggle and in the Party's line [duong loi]. For psychological reasons they wanted a rapid development of armed forces. A few Party members automatically killed [enemy] spies [do them], and armed the masses to resist [the enemy's] terror. But these incidents were not numerous because higher echelons strongly criticized [kiem thao; to review critically] them.¹²⁶

The reaction of Party officials in the North was both prompt and unequivocal. According to a broadcast by the Voice of Vietnam:

a profound study of the contents of this station's programs [i.e. the Voice of South Viet Nam Liberation Front] proves that its broadcasts are badly biased and that it clumsily and audibly slanders people. It falsifies Marxism-Leninism, manufactures statements which it ascribes to theoreticians of the communist and socialist bloc, fabricates non-existent news from the North, and distorts the policies of our party and government. By such doings, its identity has been revealed, and it is our duty to point out that the station represents a case of dishonest impersonation, and is a broadcasting station set up by the lackeys serving the Americans in the south.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.25.

¹²⁷ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Viet-Nam, 0030 GMT, June 29, 1958; a similar quotation may be found in Kahin and Lewis, The United States in Vietnam, op.cit., p.111 which attributes the source to an editorial appearing in Nhan Dan on June 28, 1958. Kahin and Lewis relied on an RVN monitoring service which reproduced radio broadcasts

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Later broadcasts by the Voice of Vietnam revealed Hanoi's sensitivities:

In conclusion, the 'Voice of the South Vietnam Liberation Front' gives its listeners the impression that the revolutionaries of South Vietnam are trying to wipe out the peasant class, the petit bourgeois, and the national bourgeois, as well as the other forces of individual production which form the classes that the enemies are to beat, and not the American imperialists and the Ngo Dinh Diem clique. These words seem to be revolutionary, but in reality they are not aimed at the principal enemies of the revolution. That is why this radio causes a listener who is not vigilant to be frightened, terrified about the revolution, about socialism.

Thus, in analyzing the content of these broadcasts, one immediately perceives that the 'Voice of the South Vietnam Liberation Front' is not the voice of the people nor the Vietnamese revolutionary movement in the south. It is not the voice of those who aspire to peace, unity, independence, and democracy in the country ...¹²⁸

Other Voice of Vietnam transmissions consistently denounced the "Voice of the South Viet Nam Liberation Front" as a psywar operation designed to push the revolutionary forces "prematurely into action". In April 1959, for example, the Voice of Vietnam called the "Voice of the Liberation Front, a traitorous spy station Everybody knows that it is one of the US-Diemists' propaganda organs. It is the voice of Vietnamese traitors, because their propaganda aims at sabotaging the North and

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in Vietnam Presse Bulletin d'Information Confidentielles. Later Kahin has written that the broadcasts of the Voice of the South Viet Nam Liberation Front were "presumed to have been 'black propaganda' operations conducted by the CIA and Diem"; George McT. Kahin, "The Pentagon Papers: A Critical Evaluation", The American Political Science Review (June 1975), Vol.LXIX, No.2, p.678.

¹²⁸ Voice of Vietnam in French to Southeast Asia, 0530 GMT, July 10, 1958.

the struggle for reunification and undermining the fatherland and nation. It is actually a spy station using the propaganda of spies and hiding under the cover of support for the Party, Government, and the North so that it will be able to sabotage the North and the Vietnamese people's revolutionary work".¹²⁹

A thorough reading of the transcripts¹³⁰ of monitored broadcasts by the Voice of the South Viet Nam Liberation Front and the replies by the Voice of Vietnam clearly indicate that the policies advocated by the former were not official Party statements. Was the Voice of the South Viet Nam Liberation Front a legitimate transmitter used by a break-away radical Party faction or was it an RVN-US "black station"? According to John Lewis it may have been both:

I was alerted to the fact that some of the broadcasts were probably not authentic on one of my several fact-finding excursions to Washington, from Ithaca, but no one was able to give me the full story. The general understanding by those who seemed to know the most was that a real Voice of South Vietnam Liberation Front was started by disgruntled Communists groups in the South, that they were probably exposed by Hanoi's agents, and that in any case the radio was captured by Diem's forces and turned into a black operation.

¹²⁹ Voice of Vietnam, 1200 GMT, April 5, 1959.

¹³⁰ The author has not consulted the Vietnam Presse Bulletin d'Information Confidentielles held by the Cornell University Library. However, all the broadcasts cited by Kahin and Lewis in The United States in Vietnam, pp. 110-112 and 123-125 have been located in either the FBIS' Daily Report or the BBC's Summary of World Broadcasts.

Since there was more than one radio going this did not happen all at once and thus the picture is confused for a time.¹³¹

Although the possibility that some of the broadcasts may have originated from discontented Party cadres¹³² cannot be discounted entirely, it seems more likely that the "Voice of the South Viet Nam Liberation Front" was a "black" RVN operation from its inception. The format of the station's broadcasts consisted mainly of apparently "straight" news items on life in the North and in the South. But on closer inspection these news items appear to be clever distortions of genuine items designed to convey an ironic meaning or to ridicule various events by the tone of the reporting. Table 8-5 provides examples of news items carried by the Voice of the South Viet Nam Liberation Front to illustrate this point.

¹³¹ Personal communication to the author by John W. Lewis dated July 17, 1974; in a letter to the author dated January 13, 1972 Professor Kahin has written, "I think it highly likely, if not certain, that these broadcasts, or at least some of them, were 'black propaganda' mounted by the US and the GVN. Whatever the case, the response from Radio Hanoi is, I think, of very real importance to an appreciation of Hanoi's point of view at that time".

¹³² Vo Van An, a senior Party cadre who served on the Tay Ninh Party committee, stated in an interview with Jeffrey Race that he had never heard of the Voice of the South Viet Nam Liberation Front. When asked to speculate he mentioned two possibilities: (1) that it was an attempt by Hanoi to portray an indigenous Communist movement in the South that was acting independently or (2) that one of the sects might have been responsible. See "Vo Van An Interview", in Jeffrey Race, compiler, Vietnamese Materials, Microfilm Reel II, pp.67-68.

TABLE 8-5

SELECTED NEWS ITEMS FROM THE 'VOICE OF THE SOUTH VIET NAM
LIBERATION FRONT'

<u>News Item:</u>	<u>Phrase designed to convey an ironic meaning:</u>
1. "intelligence units have been created by the Executive Committee of the Dong Thap People's Liberation Front" - May 26, 1958	1. "their existence has been revealed by local people faithful to the Americans and Diem"
2. "the intelligence units are resolutely carrying out their activities" - May 26, 1958	2. "Nguyen Minh Tam has surrendered ...This act...has caused some trouble in our ranks"
3. "a small group of intellectuals has taken advantage of the mistakes correction policy" - May 27, 1958	3. "They have demanded ... to write as they please, freedom of thought..."
4. "it is necessary to deal severely with the 'Nhan Van-Giai Pham' Group and to knock down the political prestige of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois intellectuals" - May 27, 1958	4. "This question can be easily resolved thanks to a great deal of valuable literary work by Soviet and Chinese writers and artists...[we will] translate these ... literary works to replace the decadent work of the bourgeois class"
5. "Southerners [were] resettled in ... [a] camp ..." - July 18, 1958	5. "[they] must work day in and day out to sell distillation waste and must live in narrow, wet and badsmelling rooms" "and everyone [was] made aware that by selling distillation waste from the Hanoi distillery, the camp would enrich the government with a sum of no mean importance".

TABLE 8-5 continued

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| <p>6. "there still are a number of dissatisfied elements [in a re-settlement camp]
- July 18, 1958</p> | <p>6. "There was a comrade who said he was an old man in order to avoid participation in labor, though he was only 60 years old..." "One woman comrade refused to work on the (pretext?) [sic] that she was pregnant. One comrade wanted to have a salary commensurate with his labor".</p> |
| <p>7. "In the 20-day contest in 119 cantons belonging to 12 districts in Thanh Hoa province, peasants have produced about one million baskets full of manure..."
- July 18, 1958</p> | <p>7. "[a certain] canton got ahead in the contest by sowing 20 baskets full of manure to one sao [360 sq. metres] of rice field".</p> |
| <p>8. "Our commentary tonight is 'The present duty of disabled veterans and fallen heroes' families"</p> <p>"However it has been noticed that a number of disabled veterans and fallen heroes' families still have erroneous thoughts".
- July 31, 1958.</p> | <p>8. "Despite their infirmities they have so far taken a positive part in the production emulation without complaints".</p> <p>"They request enormous assistance from the government and do not want to participate in production".
"Other disabled veterans participate in production according to their qualifications and do not rely completely on the government".</p> |
| <p>9. "An interprovince emulation campaign between Hai Duong and Hung Yen was launched to obtain results to celebrate the anniversary of the August revolution and independence day".
- July 31, 1958</p> | <p>9. "Efforts have been made in Hai Duong to advance the production of manure".</p> |

TABLE 8-5 continued

10. "To celebrate the 13th national day on Aug. 19 in various localities, despite many difficulties, the liberation front succeeded in organizing many meetings to talk about the anniversary of our national revolution".
- August 25, 1958

10. "Due to the inefficiency of a certain number of our cadres and combatants, the organization did not produce the results expected. Our preparatory work had not been kept secret, and because of the carelessness of our investigations, some spies had succeeded in infiltrating our ranks and in carrying out their subversive activities".

SOURCE: Voice of the South Viet Nam Liberation Front as monitored by United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service and the British Broadcasting Corporation.

In addition to the tone of the broadcast commentaries, which does not appear to have changed over time, there are other reasons for doubting the authenticity of the Voice of the South Viet Nam Liberation Front. Firstly, senior Party defectors had no knowledge of this station.¹³³ Secondly, the former head of the RVN's Psychological Warfare Directorate (1956-62) has stated in an interview that his government ran a clandestine radio service which pretended to be "Liberation Radio".¹³⁴ Thirdly, a senior

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ See the account of the interview between Nguyen Van Chau and Diane Johnstone, a correspondent with Dispatch New Service International, in Orleans, France as printed in The St. Louis-Post Dispatch (September 24, 1972), p.4. According to Johnstone, "Chau said that the Saigon regime used to, and probably still does, run a clandestine radio which pretended to be 'Liberation Radio' in order to diffuse 'black propaganda'. The broadcasts were patterned

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official in the Central Intelligence Agency, who originally used transcripts of the Voice of the South Viet Nam Liberation Front prepared by the RVN, has now admitted the likelihood that they were "black propaganda".¹³⁵ Fourthly, it appears that in 1961 a correspondent with United Press International stumbled on the fact that "the 'Voice of the Southern Liberation Front' had been set up by the South Vietnamese government and that its broadcasts praising the achievements of the Communists in the North were intended to be used as grounds for denouncing the Government of the VDR (Vietnam Democratic Republic) to the ISCC".¹³⁶ American involvement in "black propaganda"

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on authentic Liberation Radio broadcasts, with just a few slight changes in detail..." From the context it would appear that Chau is referring to 1961-62 when the authentic Liberation Radio began broadcasting. It is possible that Chau is confused on this point and that the model for the fake 'Liberation Radio' was the 'Voice of Vietnam' which was broadcasting in 1958 and not the real 'Liberation Radio' which did not begin transmitting until 1961.

¹³⁵ During an interview with George Carver at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia his assistant, Joseph Weiss, indicated without contradiction from Mr Carver who was present, that if Mr Carver were to re-write his article in the April 1966 issue of Foreign Affairs that he would drop reference to these broadcasts as information at hand indicated that they were not authentic (according to my interview notes Weiss termed them "spurious"). I took this statement as a polite way of answering my question concerning the authenticity of the broadcasts without at the same time confirming a "black" CIA operation. Interview with George Carver and Joseph Weiss, Langley, Virginia, 23 October 1972.

¹³⁶ Hanoi Radio to South Vietnam, 0415 GMT, March 21, 1961 in BBC, Summary of World Broadcasts (March 29, 1961), Part 3, 2nd Series, No.602, p.FE/602/A3/1. I have been unable to locate the original UPI dispatch.

activities directed against the DRVN can be dated to this period. In April 1958 the U.S. National Security Council listed as among the American objectives towards Viet-Nam the following:

"54. Assist Free Viet Nam to develop a strong stable and constitutional government to enable Free Viet Nam to assert an increasingly attractive contrast to conditions in the present Communist zone.

55. Work toward the weakening of the Communists in the North and South Viet Nam in order to bring about the eventual peaceful reunification of a free and independent Viet Nam under anti-Communist leadership.¹³⁷

At the suggestion of the Central Intelligence Agency the following paragraph was added to item 54:

In this regard encourage and assist public relations and public information programs of the Government of Viet Nam directed both internally to the free Vietnamese and externally to north Vietnam. In this effort priority should be given to areas of greatest dissidence, particularly in the extreme South.¹³⁸

A special supplementary statement on North Viet-Nam was attached which contained two items of interest in this regard:

78. Assist the Government of Viet Nam to undertake programs of political, economic and psychological warfare against Viet Minh Communists.

76. Probe weaknesses of the Viet Minh and exploit them internally and internationally whenever possible.

¹³⁷ "Note by the Executive Secretary to the National Security Council on U.S. Policy in Mainland Southeast Asia", (April 2, 1958), NSC 5809, in United States - Vietnam Relations, Book 10, p.1131.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p.1132.

The National Security Council policy statement would appear to encourage a joint venture between the U.S. and RVN governments such as the "Voice of South Viet Nam Liberation Front". Within the year, another clandestine transmitter (undeniably a "black propaganda" operation) entitled the "Voice of the Khmer Freedom Movement" was broadcasting anti-Sihanouk propaganda into Cambodia.¹³⁹ No doubt these two ventures were related.

If the Voice of the South Viet Nam Liberation Front was originally an authentic station that was later captured and used by the RVN and/or U.S. for "black propaganda" purposes, the timing of this switch would be of interest. If we knew the date, for example, it would be possible to isolate the views of disgruntled cadres from later anti-Communist propaganda. Unfortunately this crucial piece of information, if it exists, cannot be located. Nevertheless the ironic tone of the commentary - noted above - was part of the station's stock-in-trade from the moment monitors picked up transmissions thus supporting the view that the station was "black" from the start. The overwhelming preoccupations with developments - initially at least - is another (i.e. the aim was to misinform

¹³⁹ Ibid., p.1124, paragraph 30 states, "Implement as appropriate covert operations designed to assist in the achievement of U.S. objectives in Southeast Asia". Operations Coordinating Board, "Report on Southeast Asia (NSC 5809)", (January 7, 1959) in *ibid.*, p.1162, states, "U.S. influence continues to be discreetly applied in the hope that the Cambodian Government will be more receptive of U.S. views". On April 10, 1959 a station calling itself the "Voice of the Khmer Freedom Movement" began anti-Sihanouk broadcasts, see BBC, Summary of World Broadcasts (April 15, 1959), No.862, Part 5, p.24. For allegations of U.S. involvement see: Norodom Sihanouk and Wilfred Burchett, My War With the C.I.A., *op.cit.*, pp.122-26.

listeners about conditions in the North rather than in the South). As a result of telling criticism from Hanoi, which charged the new station with avoiding key issues, the Voice of the South Viet Nam Liberation Front appears to have made a few tactical adjustments in order to maintain a semblance of credibility. Criticism of the American presence and the U.S. economic aid programme featured prominently - themes which Ngo Dinh Nhu himself encouraged in the controlled Saigon press.¹⁴⁰

Although the complete facts surrounding the Voice of the South Viet Nam Liberation Front may never be known, Hanoi's public reaction is on the record. If there was any doubt over Party policy the Voice of Vietnam could not be blamed for trying to set the record straight. Even if one assumes that early transmissions of the Voice of the South Viet Nam Liberation Front represented authentic views of disgruntled Party cadres in Nam Bo it seems certain that they were uninfluential in altering the course of Party policy. As we shall note below despite grumblings of discontent within the southern Party organization, the Nam Bo Regional Committee had little trouble in maintaining its authority.

F. Violence in the Central Highlands

Cadres belonging to the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) began their political activities in the Highlands

¹⁴⁰ For examples of Ngo Dinh Nhu's criticisms see: Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid, op.cit., pp.89-90. For Nhu's views in 1961 see Robert Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op.cit., pp.212-213.

of Trung Bo as early as the mid-1930s.¹⁴¹ At that time it was the policy of the French colonial administration to send political detainees to mountain camps. From that time, and especially during the Resistance War, these cadres made remarkable progress in winning over selected ethnic minority groups and their leaders. Together they created revolutionary base areas from which they attacked French forces. One scholar has estimated that as many as 6,000 tribesmen¹⁴² (mainly Rhade) regrouped to the DRVN in 1954-55. At the same time a Party Committee for Trung Bo (Xu Uy Trung Bo) was created to oversee the remaining cadres who stayed behind¹⁴³ and who were expected to conduct the next phase of the movement: political struggle.

The new Diem government in Saigon quickly moved to incorporate the Crown Domain land in central Viet-Nam into the administrative structure of the State of Viet-Nam. In 1957, as we have noted in chapter seven, a resettlement programme was begun which resulted in the migration of thousands of lowland ethnic Vietnamese into

¹⁴¹ Ta Xuan Linh, "Armed Uprisings by Ethnic Minorities Along the Truong Son", Part I, Vietnam Courier (September 1974), New Series No.28, p.15.

¹⁴² Gerald C. Hickey, Preliminary Research Report on the PMS, op.cit., p.26; and Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, op.cit., p.281.

¹⁴³ Working Paper, Appendices, Items Nos.19 and 204; Palmerlee, "The Central Office of South Viet-Nam", op.cit., p.4. Denis Warner, The Last Confucian, op.cit., p.142 has written, "Everywhere there were some [stay-behind cadres], however. In Kontum Province in the High Plateau sixty cadres worked among the montagnards. In Pleiku there were about a hundred, and in Darlac, forty".

the Highlands.¹⁴⁴ This was followed by another programme designed to shift highlanders into camps which the RVN could more easily control. An attempt was made through the anti-Communist denunciation campaign to identify Party cadres and their sympathisers. All three programmes led to the disaffection of sections of the highland population who chose to respond in the traditional way by withdrawing further upland away from Vietnamese control. When force or coercion was employed¹⁴⁵ to resist these efforts, the highlanders fought back, even with only primitive weapons.

During 1955-56, as a result of the ACDC in the lowland provinces of Trung Bo, Party cadres began to seek refuge in the highland base areas.¹⁴⁶ According to one account as many as 1,000 cadres may have made the trek into western Quang Nam province alone. As there were more than one

¹⁴⁴Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid, op.cit., p.78, "Certain Land Development centers were used as political reeducation camps and barracks for political prisoners under the supervision of army forces Camps at Pleiku and Banmethuot had been designated as resettlement centers, to be supported by U.S. funds, without any suggestion that they would be detention camps"; Committee on Government Operations, Land Reform in Vietnam, pp.8-9, "The lands occupied by the Montagnards were declared by the GVN to be public lands and the Montagnards were denied the legal rights to occupy and cultivate the land unless they purchased it and paid taxes".

¹⁴⁵ According to Y Bay, a Sedang and a cadre with the NFL's Autonomous Minority Movement, "We had greater losses between 1957 and 1959 than during the nine years of the anti-French war". Quoted in Burchett, Vietnam Will Win!, op.cit., pp.144-145; Hanoi Radio in French, 0500 GMT, November 14, 1958 reported the forcible resettlement of 2,000 minority people from Binh Dinh at a camp named Van Thanh, and the resettlement of 4,000 Montagnards in Binh Tuy.

¹⁴⁶ Ta Xuan Linh, "Armed Uprising by Ethnic Minorities Along the Truong Son", op.cit., p.18; Zasloff, Origins of the Insurgency, op.cit., pp.12 and 21. Vu Can, "The People's Struggles Against the US-Diem Regime", op.cit., pp.111-126 provides a general view of developments in the Highlands.

hundred secure villages in the central highlands, the Party's underground there was able to absorb these political refugees. These villages "later became revolutionary bases, inviolable bastions of the revolution".¹⁴⁷

The balance of forces began to shift in favour of the revolutionaries throughout 1957 and especially during 1958. Several reasons account for this. Firstly, the difficult programme of consolidation and expanding bases made rapid progress. In Tra Bong district of Quang Ngai, for example, cadres withdrew to the wooded hills and began preparing secret camps. There they armed themselves with weapons left in the south after regroupment.¹⁴⁸ In 1958 resistance zones were "extended to the mountains, the three border area, and further north to areas bordering on the Central Highlands, parts untrodden by the resistance forces" previously. Secondly, these cadres embarked on a programme to make themselves economically self-sufficient, especially in food production. Thirdly, the cadres conducted a programme of "cultural and political studies" for themselves and for ethnic minority youths who had joined them. Thus the foundation for an organized political movement was laid. Finally, as the various RVN programmes picked up pace, more and more highlanders became alienated, creating an even better operational environment for Party cadres.

¹⁴⁷ Ta Xuan Linh, "Armed Uprising by Ethnic Minorities Along the Truong Son", op.cit., p.19.

¹⁴⁸ Republic of Vietnam, Ministry of National Defense, Study of the Activation and Activities of R, op.cit., p.22.

These developments, however positive from the Party's own viewpoint, contained elements of a dilemma as the "revolutionary potential" in certain highland localities threatened to outpace other areas. On the one hand, Party cadres were apparently quite successful in organizing various tribal groupings (Kor, Hre, Katu, Bahnar, Raglay). By the end of 1957, according to one writer, "most leading bodies [i.e. Party-controlled organizations] at district level were staffed by cadres chosen from amongst the ethnic minorities. Most tribal chiefs and village patriarchs sided with the revolutionaries..."¹⁵⁰ As a result it was possible to launch a political struggle movement by relating the three themes spelled out in "Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam" to local conditions.¹⁵¹ Resistance to forced resettlement and poor camp conditions once resettlement had taken place, were major issues exploited by Party cadres,¹⁵² as well as corvee labour, taxes, loss of land rights and the application of Vietnamese laws (which took no account of highland customs which varied among tribal groups anyway).

On the other hand, Party cadres faced the problem of how to respond to growing armed violence which threatened to lead to premature local uprisings which could be easily

¹⁵⁰ Ta Xuan Linh, "Armed Uprising by Ethnic Minorities Along the Truong Son", op.cit., p.19; for "most" read "some".

¹⁵¹ Ibid.; Burchett, Vietnam Will Win! op.cit., p.116; Cao Van Luong, "The Struggle of the National Minorities of Tay Nguyen", Vietnamese Studies (1966), No.8, p.189.

¹⁵² Ta Xuan Linh, "Armed Uprisings by Ethnic Minorities Along the Truong Son", Part 2, Vietnam Courier (October 1974), New Series No.29, p.18.

crushed.¹⁵³ If cadres attempted to restrict the tempo of highland retaliation might they not lose their hard won positions of trust? It appears that sporadic killing of RVN officials was soon accompanied by a better-organized campaign influenced by the Party underground. According to Ta Xuan Linh, "armed agitation groups were formed to eliminate cruel officials and traitors. They included national defense groups and former resistance members' armed groups".¹⁵⁴ There was another purpose for in 1958 it had been decided to wage "all possible forms of resistance to the Ngo Dinh regime". Linh has written:

To facilitate these preparations, the revolutionary forces disrupted and later completely destroyed village and hamlet administrations, especially in remote areas. In the highlands, the Diem ruling machine became practically ineffective A few remaining cruel officials had to flee and hide in military posts and district capitals.¹⁵⁵

It would seem from the accounts available that the rise in highland violence preceded the Party's ability to control, let alone direct, it. Throughout 1957 and 1958 most of the targets were RVN officials involved in highland resettlement. In early 1957 members of the Katu were responsible for murdering several RVN officials in western Quang Nam, as part of a system of seasonal inter-tribal vendettas.¹⁵⁶ In another district of the same

153 Ibid.

154 Ibid., p.19.

155 Ibid.

156 "According to an old custom, every spring and autumn people along the Truong Son used to organize inter-tribal 'vendetta' battles", quoted in *ibid.*, p.18.

province tribal youths attacked the Thanh My resettlement camp "with poisoned and incendiary arrows".¹⁵⁷ They later ambushed and killed three RVN officials. These and other highland attacks brought on increased government repression as both police and soldiers attempted to locate and punish those responsible, thus escalating the level of violence. Party cadres quickly made contact with minority dissidents and attempted to channel their energies for Party ends.

Broadcasts by the Voice of Vietnam in various tribal dialects extolled the progress made in the DRVN in setting up autonomous regions for ethnic minorities.¹⁵⁸ Sometime in 1958 (perhaps as a counter to the independent Bajaraka Movement described in chapter seven) a highland autonomy movement was launched.¹⁵⁹ Training programmes for ethnic minority cadres were instituted and a network of local cadres was soon established. Secret agents were also assigned to penetrate RVN military and administrative posts.¹⁶⁰

157 Ibid.

158 Hickey, Preliminary Research Report on the PMS, op.cit., pp.26-27; Republic of Vietnam, Violations of the Geneva Agreements by the Viet-Minh Communists, op.cit., p.105; Hanoi Radio in Rhade, 0430 GMT, November 27, 1958 and Hanoi Radio in Vietnamese, 1200 GMT, November 30, 1958. See also the comments by George K. Tanham, Communist Revolutionary Warfare: The Vietminh in Indochina (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), p.152.

159 Cao Van Luong, "The Struggle of the National Minorities of Tay Nguyen Against U.S. Imperialism", op.cit., p.190.

160 "The government has been able to restrict but not eliminate the subversive and espionage activities of clandestine Communist agents. It is probable that Communists have penetrated some local army and security units, village councils, and local branches of the government There

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Throughout the remainder of the year developments picked up. In February, after a period of quiet planning between Party cadres and Raglay tribesmen, the escape of inmates at Camp Brawn (a resettlement centre) was effected. Shortly thereafter, Raglay living at Tam Ngan did likewise.¹⁶¹ Once out of the RVN's grip they set about preparing "combat villages" (defended in the traditional manner with bamboo spikes, booby-traps, etc.) and organizing self-defence groups. The following month members of the To Lo tribe escaped RVN attempts to resettle them along Phu Yen's National Route One. They too took to the interior where they set up a defensive system to resist their pursuers.¹⁶²

The combination of all these happenings forced Party leaders in Trung Bo (and indeed elsewhere) to consider once again the question of armed struggle. Although the following section will deal with developments throughout

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is probably a widespread Communist underground in the urban areas, especially Saigon, and Communist intelligence of GVN plans and activities is probably good. Communist agents are also stimulating unrest among the tribal minorities in the central highlands ..." U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Prospects for North and South Vietnam. National Intelligence Estimate 63-59 (May 26, 1959), op.cit., p.1193.

¹⁶¹ Ta Xuan Linh, "Armed Uprisings by Ethnic Minorities Along the Truong Son", Part 2, op.cit., p.18.

¹⁶² Ibid.; Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid, op.cit., p.78, wrote, "The whole question [of resettlement] broke out into the open with an incident in June 1958: the village of Cu Ty rose against its guards during a heavy rain, attacking them as they huddled under ponchos, seized weapons and vehicles, and fled to Cambodia".

South Viet-Nam, it is important to note the pressures building up in the Highlands. There Party officials noted sporadic and ever-increasing independent attacks by tribal minorities against the RVN. Coinciding with these attacks were the Party's successful efforts to create secure base areas and active self-defence groups. Minority leaders, some of whose ties to the Party dated back to the anti-French Resistance, wanted assistance in their endeavours. The Party responded by providing training and equipment and various sorts of material. Nevertheless the question remained: what was the Party's policy on armed struggle? Part of this dilemma was summarised by Sao Nam, a cadre who operated in Quang Nam and Quang Ngai provinces at that time:

Before 1959, when we started to organize our real strength to try to find out where we stood, we asked people to wage a political struggle only - around economic questions, living standards, democratic rights; against unpaid labor, conscription and savage beatings ... although we sometime had arms hidden away, we remained disciplined. We had to put up with it [RVN repression] and do nothing. But when people saw that this passive attitude only encouraged the enemy, and when some of the tribes-people in the mountains decided to resist with armed struggle, using their rudimentary weapons, we agreed with them. This was not yet a real armed struggle but a legal struggle using rudimentary weapons in self-defense, such as spiked traps to limit the enemy's attempts to enter their villages.¹⁶³

Apparently the Party's line on armed violence - extermination of traitors but not armed struggle - was

¹⁶³ Burchett, Vietnam Will Win! op.cit., p.116.

the subject of intense discussion among cadres in Trung Bo in late 1957. At that time, according to one writer, they

received materials sent from Nam Bo containing the view-points of the leaders of the struggle in South Viet-Nam as a whole. These documents indicated clearly that, because of the brutal fascist policies of the Saigon regime, there was no other way out than to use people's revolutionary violence. They also pointed out the necessity to prepare for an armed uprising to wrest back power for the people. They listed some experiences of the Nam Bo people and stated that timely armed activities in self-defense had been carried out and that the people's armed forces had been formed shortly after Ngo Dinh Diem's had started his atrocious campaign of terror. (emphasis added)¹⁶⁴

As a result of the documents dispatched from Nam Bo, and in light of the discussions held between Party cadres and minority leaders, and "pending the decision about a new line"¹⁶⁵ Party officials in Trung Bo "took the initiative of gradually changing the local movement into a combined political and military struggle".¹⁶⁶

These same officials decided to test this new strategy by limiting it to the western districts of Ninh Thuan and Quang Ngai provinces. Accordingly sometime around March-April 1958, Tran Nam Trung, the Party's most senior official in Trung Bo, gave the order to prepare for the first armed uprising in Tra Bong district of Quang Ngai

¹⁶⁴ Ta Xuan Linh, "Armed Uprisings by Ethnic Minorities Along the Truong Son", Part 2, p.19.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

where the provincial party committee was located.¹⁶⁷
 In July 1958 a congress of Vietnamese Party cadres and representatives of the Kor, Hre and Ca Dong met in Tra Bong "to discuss the waging of all possible forms of resistance to the Ngo Dinh Diem regime."¹⁶⁸ It was from this time onwards that determined efforts were made to weaken the RVN by eliminating its officials on the one hand, and building up the revolutionary forces on the other. The tempo of the times have been aptly captured by Ta Xuan Linh:

The building of revolutionary forces was speeded up. Leading bodies of villages and districts were strengthened and mass organizations were re-organized. Special attention was paid to the building of people's armed forces, the young people in secret camps were organized into militia units. Villages and hamlets were gradually organized into 'fighting' villages and hamlets were guarded by sharp bamboo spikes, booby traps, an alert system, and other measures.¹⁶⁹

While these preparations were being set in train the RVN continued to launch forays into the uplands as well as instigating an "economic blockade" of dissident areas (denying the tribesmen salt, for example).¹⁷⁰

In October and again in December Tra Bong district witnessed apparently spontaneous local rebellions in Tra Khe and Tra Linh villages respectively.¹⁷¹ Needless to say the

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.; "Tran Nam Trung" is a nom d'guerre meaning "Loyal to the South".

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.; Hanoi Radio, 0830 GMT, October 26, 1958; and Burchett, The Furtive War, op.cit., p.125.

¹⁷¹ Ta Xuan Linh, "Armed Uprisings by Ethnic Minorities Along the Truong Son", Part 2, p.19.

RVN held the Voice of Vietnam responsible for inciting the disturbances. Party officials, on the other hand, were preoccupied with a different question: were the other areas of the South similarly ripe for rebellion?¹⁷²

IV. THE THIRD CONFERENCE OF THE NAM BO REGIONAL COMMITTEE (August 1958)

Almost eighteen months separated the second and third conferences (hoi nghi) of the Nam Bo Regional Committee. In the intervening period Party officials witnessed definite progress on all fronts.¹⁷³ The Party's organization had been consolidated and maintained during the year.¹⁷⁴ New recruits were attracted and old contacts reactivated. The existing resistance bases absorbed a variety of political refugees and served as ideal locations for indoctrination and training programmes. New bases¹⁷⁵ were established, most successfully in the mountain areas to the north of Resistance Zones C and D and in the extreme

¹⁷² Ibid.; for example Quang Ngai was considered more advanced than Ninh Thuan.

¹⁷³ Chan (Tran Van Bo), a former Party cadre has stated, "Then there was a second period from 1957 to 1958, during which the Party recovered and was comparatively well off"; quoted in Race, "The Origins of the Second Indochina War", op.cit., p.372. Elsewhere Chan has commented, "During 1957 and 1958 the Party was able to recover its apparatus and its mass organizations, and it counted on contradictions within the government to produce a coup"; ibid., p.376.

¹⁷⁴ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, pp.8 and 26; nevertheless there were problems, see "To Chuc Moi" (New Organization), an internal Party document dating to early 1957 in Race, compiler, Vietnamese Materials, Microfilm Reel I, document 1004, pp.1-2.

¹⁷⁵ Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, op.cit., p.367.

southwest. The Party's clandestine apparatus extended its penetration of legal organizations, such as schools, professional associations, religious groups, and trucking companies as well as various RVN civil and military groups.¹⁷⁶ Although the sect forces had been reduced, the Party itself had been successful in developing village self-defence groups in addition to regional force units. As the military base was strengthened, squads and platoons were gradually expanded into company size and by mid-1958 a battalion was created.¹⁷⁷ Similar progress was made in reorientating the form and content of the political struggle movement. The errors of the Diem regime offered fertile ground for exploitation.¹⁷⁸ By the time the third conference convened in August 1958 the tru gian campaign had already begun to have an impact of raising the morale of the Party's supporters in addition to its intended effect on the RVN administration.¹⁷⁹

176 Warner, The Last Confucian, op.cit., p.143; for contemporary reports consult: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Probable Developments in North and South Vietnam Through mid-1957, National Intelligence Estimate, No.63-56 (July 17, 1956), op.cit., p.1077; and MAAG-Vietnam, Country Statement on MDAP, Non-NATO Countries (January 1957) in United States - Vietnam Relations, Book 2, IV.A.5 Tab 4, p.16.

177 Ta Xuan Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet Nam", op.cit., p.22.

178 Warner, The Last Confucian, op.cit., p.154.

179 Rostow, The Diffusion of Power, op.cit., p.41.

Nevertheless, despite these positive developments, the Party was far from able to take on the Diem regime in a full-blown campaign of armed struggle. The leaders in Nam Bo, despite whatever provocations they faced at the hands of the Diemists, still remained cautious. Although they held that a resumption of armed struggle was necessary (at some point in the future) they held back from encouraging premature action.¹⁸⁰ By the third conference it was evident that the tides of revolutionary progress were once again beginning to ebb.

The Party and its various organizations did not operate in a vacuum, as they faced intense competition by the RVN authorities. By late 1957 and early 1958 the Diem regime took up the slack and renewed its efforts to extend control in the countryside. By the Party's own admission, RVN police and security officials, as well as hamlet and village officials, began to operate in areas where they had been absent for months.¹⁸¹ Thus the Party's newly rejuvenated political struggle began to wind downwards. In the words of a later Party review:

From the middle of 1958 to the end of 1959 the revolutionary movement in Nam Bo remained at a standstill. The political movement could not be initiated. The movement demanding social welfare and democratic rights was sporadic and uncoordinated.¹⁸²

Wherever the RVN managed to re-install its administration, the Party encountered difficulties in conducting normal operations. According to a former Party cadre:

¹⁸⁰ Race, "The Origins of the Second Indochina War", op.cit., pp.368-369.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p.371.

¹⁸² Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.19; Burchett, Vietnam Will Win! op.cit., pp.51-52.

... the Government began to establish its village and hamlet apparatus in the remote rural areas where the French never dared to set foot. When the [Diem] government local apparatus was established this naturally limited the Party's activities.¹⁸³

The Party's nascent armed forces likewise encountered problems. Although the tru gian campaign was seen as successful, other operations were less so:

In some places where our armed forces appeared the enemy patrolled, controlled and terrorized the people. Sometimes our armed forces could neither counter enemy sweep operations nor could they protect the people because they were weak or had to act in accordance with the policy lines of the Party. They could not create favorable conditions for the political movement and they met many difficulties. The scattered killings of tyrants did not entirely affect the enemy's morale except to some small extent. As a consequence when the enemy terrorized the people, our armed forces were inadequate to protect the people. The people were afraid when our armed forces operated in their areas. The enemy always tried to locate the camp sites of our armed forces in order to attack them, separate them from the masses, and inflict casualties on them. At that time [from 1957 onwards] there were no military bases, our armed forces had to disperse and hide in thick jungles or in the middle of ricefields. They were thus driven into an isolated position. In places where the terrain features were disadvantageous to operate, our armed forces had to disperse widely among the people. They were quite weak. To maintain a lawful position for the people, we restricted armed activities and tried to prevent armed forces from interfering in the matters concerning the people's struggle movement.¹⁸⁴

As was indicated earlier (Table 7-3) this was one of the most intense periods of anti-Communist suppression.¹⁸⁵

183 Race, "The Origins of the Second Indochina War", op.cit., p.371; Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.8.

184 Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.37.

185 For examples of reporting on the arrests of Communist Party members, in chronological order, see: "Chinese Communist Cadres Arrested in Ba Xuyen Province", The Times of Viet Nam (October 11, 1957), Vol.I, No.10, p.1; Working Paper,

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According to Communist figures¹⁸⁶ 57% of all persons killed during the July 1954 - February 1959 period, were killed during the months November 1957 - February 1959. The percentages of those missing and arrested during the same time period represent 50% and 66% respectively. Various Party cadres have indicated that this was "the darkest period".¹⁸⁷ In late 1957 the RVN took steps to control Party-influenced trade unions.¹⁸⁸ Early in the next year attempts to organize a student struggle movement around issues of educational reform foundered.¹⁸⁹ Several of the self-defence organizations "were broken up".¹⁹⁰ The sect forces had "dwindled into a mere token force" while the armed forces had to be kept dispersed.¹⁹¹ These were the trends which the Nam Bo Regional Committee had to consider when it met in August for its third conference.

According to the only available account of this meeting:

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Appendices, Item 28, pp.1 and 6; Andrews, The Village War, op.cit., p.44; U.S. Department of State, A Threat to Peace, op.cit., pp.26-27; "Police Killed Michelin Rubber Plantation Attackers", The Times of Viet Nam, (November 12, 1958), Vol.2, No.250, pp.1-2.

186 These percentages were calculated from the data appearing in Table 7-3.

187 Sheehan, The Pentagon Papers, op.cit., p.74; Zasloff, Origins of the Insurgency, op.cit., p.15; and Ta Xuan Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet Nam", op.cit., p.22.

188 Ton Vy, "The Workers' Struggle", op.cit., p.86.

189 To Minh Trung, "The Students' and Pupils' Struggle", op.cit., p.117.

190 Ta Xuan Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet Nam", op.cit. p.22.

191 Ibid.

The resolutions of this conference were based on the content and spirit of the document 'Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam'. Although the entire Regional Committee realized that they no longer had the ability to peacefully change [the] political power [structure] in the South, they nevertheless affirmed that the Revolution in the South could only develop according to the line "peaceful means must be employed flexibly with other means". The subject of arms [i.e. violence] was stated more positively [i.e. affirmatively] than before but the approved line of struggle was not yet spelled out clearly.

In fact the leadership of the Regional Committee more and more came to favor limiting the use of armed force. It criticized those who favored [an increase in armed violence] arguing that these persons' ideas were in opposition to the Party's line.¹⁹²

The point of the debate appeared to be, not whether to use armed force, but when, with what units (sects, companies, battalions) and for what purpose (self-defence, extermination of traitors, or a general uprising). In late 1957 the Nam Bo leadership sent a review of armed activities in the south to the Trung Bo Committee. This review stated that "there was no other way out than to use people's revolutionary violence", and that it was necessary "to prepare for an armed uprising".¹⁹³ By the time of the third conference in August, Tran Nam Trung had already taken the initiative when he issued orders to prepare for an armed uprising in a carefully selected test area. It is doubtful the Nam Bo Committee was unaware of these developments. Nevertheless the debate continued. According to a CIA study of this period:

¹⁹² Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.32.

¹⁹³ Ta Xuan Linh, "Armed Uprisings by Ethnic Minorities Along the Truong Son", Part 2, op.cit., p.19.

[The] debate over strategy continued through 1958. Reports captured while being forwarded via Lao Dong [i.e. VWP] channels from South Vietnam to Hanoi indicate that some subordinates there clung to the belief that the Diem regime could be toppled without recourse to guerrilla warfare, and that others despaired of success without substantial military aid from the North. There is also evidence throughout 1958 that Viet Cong [sic] tactics were being subjected to careful study in Hanoi.¹⁹⁴

Although the Regional Committee continued to place restrictions on the widespread use of armed force they nevertheless permitted certain specific actions. In August, the very month the third conference was held, Party-led units successfully attacked RVN posts in Dau Tieng and Bien Hoa, distributing the captured armouries to neighbouring Thu Dau Mot and Tay Ninh provinces so that cadres there could develop their own military forces.¹⁹⁵ The consolidation and development of military units continued. By the end of the year an army command was set up in western Nam Bo to coordinate operations with the Cao Thien Hoa Binh forces in the east. An estimated 300 selected cadres joined the Party's Nam Bo organization after completing the long overland march from the North via Laos.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Memorandum (September 22, 1965) op.cit., p.2; "Hanoi and the Insurgency in South Vietnam", in United States - Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab 3, p.55.

¹⁹⁵ Ta Xuan Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet Nam", op.cit., p.23.

¹⁹⁶ Republic of Vietnam, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Infiltration of Communist Armed Elements and Clandestine Introduction of Arms From North to South Vietnam (Saigon: June 1967), pp.8 and 34.

The RVN was quick to react to these developments. In September Operation Nguyen Trai swept through the western provinces of An Giang, An Xuyen (Ca Mau), Ba Xuyen, Kien Giang (Ha Tien-Rach Gia) and Phong Dinh (Can Tho) continuing until February 1959.¹⁹⁷ Meanwhile developments in the DRVN had reached the point where the Central Committee was once again prepared to conduct a comprehensive review of developments throughout Vietnam and to examine once more the interrelatedness of policies in the North and South. After two years of implementation of the policies outlined in "Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam" was the South now ready to enter a new stage? In order to find out Le Duan himself made an unpublicised inspection tour of the south.¹⁹⁸ As the former secretary of the Nam Bo Regional Committee Le Duan was the right man to conduct a thorough assessment. He made the journey in late 1958 and probably returned to Hanoi sometime in December. Duan's report was considered

¹⁹⁷ We Open the File, op.cit., p.71; and Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0526 GMT, March 19, 1959.

¹⁹⁸ Carver, "The Faceless Viet Cong", op.cit., p.359, writes: "Hanoi was far more satisfied with the pace of Viet Cong progress and was particularly chagrined at the movement's failure to win a really significant political following. Several Viet Cong cadre members who were subsequently captured have reported that in late 1958 Le Duan himself was sent on an extensive inspection trip in the South ..."; P.J. Honey, Genesis of a Tragedy: The Historical Background to the Vietnam War (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1968), pp.73-74 dates the trip to late 1957 with Le Duan returning to the North in 1958; according to Phan The Ngoc, a member of the My Tho province committee specialising in "arts and letters" (uy vien ban van nghe) he (Ngoc) accompanied Le Duan as an escort officer during part of this trip in late 1958. Interview with Phan The Ngoc, Saigon, Ministry of Open Arms, June 8, 1972.

by the VWP's 15th Plenum which met in January 1959. In order to understand fully the background of this historic plenum it will be necessary to review the events of 1957-58 period, focusing this time on the North. There the VWP had been charged with implementing the two other main missions set out in "Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam" and by the Party's 11th Plenum: consolidate the north and win the sympathy and support of the world's people.

CHAPTER 9

CONSOLIDATING THE NORTH AND WINNING THE SYMPATHY AND SUPPORT OF THE WORLD'S PEOPLE (1957-58)

I. INTRODUCTION

During the last quarter of 1956 the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam passed through a period of domestic crisis occasioned by mistakes committed during the agrarian reform campaign. In November peasant discontent flared into open revolt in several villages of Nghe An province. These problems alone were sufficient to postpone any plans some leaders might have had for giving greater attention to developments in the South. There, as previous chapters have indicated, Diem surmounted domestic opposition and began to consolidate his regime with generous assistance from the United States. Party officials in Nam Bo faced a crisis too as cadres became disillusioned with their situation. They wondered aloud how reunification could be achieved if Diem was permitted to strengthen his rule while the Party pursued an ineffectual policy of peaceful protest. In the face of the anti-Communist denunciation campaign and military sweeps some cadres clamoured for a return to armed struggle.

These points of view were woven into discussions at the VWP's 10th and 11th Plenums held in October and December 1956, respectively. Once again the view that consolidation of the North was the main priority was reaffirmed. This was so for two reasons: to protect the building of socialism in the North and to serve as the base for the struggle in the South. In other words, because

Party leaders had erred in expecting a speedy reunification of the country, they were now faced with the incredibly complex problem of how to integrate resources and planning in both halves of the country given the fact that the North was liberated and the South was under "enemy" control. One result was that a long-range strategy for the South was mapped out in a major policy document entitled "Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam" described earlier. In the North, meanwhile, the Party launched a "rectification of errors campaign" to redress many of the injustices committed in the course of land reform. Nevertheless the North still faced underlying problems of economic recovery and Party reorganization. At the 6th Session of the DRVN's National Assembly (December 1956 - January 1957) great attention was given to economic and financial matters related to increasing agricultural production (the main task) and developing light industry and handicrafts (key tasks).

The new review of these policies was slated for July 1957, when the National Assembly was expected to convene its 7th Session. However due to typhoon damage which weakened the dikes and caused intensive flooding the National Assembly postponed its meeting until September.¹ This session was originally scheduled to follow the VWP's 12th Plenum which met in March. On the eve of the Central Committee's meeting the VWP celebrated its sixth anniversary (3 March 1957). In a speech given in honour of that

¹ Voice of Vietnam dictation in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 2330 GMT, September 5, 1957 carries an announcement by Ton Quang Phiet, vice chairman of the National Assembly's Standing Committee.

occasion General Vo Nguyen Giap summed up the dilemmas facing the Party throughout Viet-Nam at that time.²

According to the General:

The revolutionary struggle of the people will still meet many difficulties, but by examining the prevailing situation in the world and in the country, and by making a comparison between the situation of the previous days and the present time, we can say that we have favorable conditions - and this is a fundamental point - and although we still have many difficulties, these difficulties can certainly be overcome. One of the objectives is the strengthening of the North in its advance toward Socialism, and there is still another: The North will be transformed into a base for the struggle for the unification of the country.

General Giap then went on to detail what "Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam" termed the "three main missions" for the future:

1. It is necessary to enlarge the anti-American-Diem front in the South, and rally and unite all people's forces which can be rallied and united, to patiently struggle against the fascist dictatorial policy, to demand democratic freedoms, to struggle against the policy of reducing [the people] to poverty, to demand the improvement of the living conditions of the people, and to demand rights of our people to a livelihood, basing ourselves on the ever-strengthened North.
2. We should hold fast and develop the people's movement and struggle in the South for the realization of the resumption of normal economic and cultural relations between the two zones...We must...struggle for the reestablishment of normal relations between the North and South to create favorable conditions so that the North and South may

² Giap's speech was broadcast in two parts: Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0440 GMT, March 4, 1957 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (March 5, 1957), No.43, pp.EEE1-EEE5; and Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, March 4, 1957 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (March 7, 1957), No.45, pp.EEE1-EEE8. Unattributed quotations in the following paragraphs are taken from this source.

draw closer to each other and advance toward reunification of the country as provided by the Geneva Accords:

3. Our practical missions [in the North] during 1957 are clearly very important and heavy (serious). It is necessary to accomplish the mistakes - correction work in order to complete the agrarian reforms. It is necessary to concentrate all our forces to basically achieve economic recovery [to pre-war levels], and all other activities should be coordinated with these two fundamental tasks. On the other hand, we should study thoroughly the line of conduct and policy, the ideology and organization of our party in order to push forward the strengthening of the North through this transitory period. We must at the same time struggle for the reunification of the country.

In short General Giap was foreshadowing the policy that would be pursued by Party leaders throughout the year. Earlier in his speech Giap drew parallels with the past to argue that the Party's "line of conduct" must be followed by all VWP members. Given the context it appears that General Giap was directing his remarks at those cadres who had misgivings about the Party's priorities, and especially about policy toward the South. To quote Giap directly:

Through twenty-seven years of struggle [i.e. 1930-1957], our people's liberation work has scored brilliant success, but the revolutionary struggle has not always gone from one victory to another. During the time of secret activities [i.e. when the Party was illegal], our people met many difficulties and obstacles. Our movement had its ups and downs. In some places, it temporarily met with insuperable obstacles, and the revolutionary organizations were dissolved and the Party's leadership interrupted. However difficulties and dangers could never check the advance of the movement.

Temporary failures could never effect the fighting spirit of the people and the Party. On the contrary, each difficulty and failure only encouraged our people to go bravely forward, and forged our Party's leadership, which became more experienced and clear-sighted....

In each phase, the Party based itself on a comparison between the enemy forces and ours to set up a strategy, to assemble all the forces which could be united, and to decide on the form of struggle which was sometimes secret and sometimes public, which sometimes appeared as a peaceful and sometimes as an armed struggle - thanks to all of which we succeeded in organizing and strengthening the revolutionary force and leading it to victory.

In other words Giap was instructing Party cadres in the North and South, who had become disillusioned, to put their faith in the VWP. No doubt the "reduction of cadres" movement in the South was designed to weed out those individuals who were incapable of the discipline expected of them. Meanwhile in the North, the Party would take similar steps to improve political control over its members.

II. THE 12th PLENUM (MARCH 1957)

There were four major topics which attracted the attention of the VWP Central Committee at its 12th Plenum: (1) the rectification of errors campaign, (2) the maintenance of public order and security, (3) the 1957 State Plan and (4) the modernization and regularization of the People's Army of Viet-Nam. All four topics were domestic issues a clear indication that agreement on southern policy had been reached for the time being. In addition to these major areas the Plenum also resolved to hold celebrations in honour of the 40th anniversary of the Soviet October Revolution.³

Although the 11th Plenum laid the "base" for the 1957 State Plan,⁴ the 12th Plenum had to consider the finer

³ Voice of Vietnam dictation in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 2330 GMT, April 22, 1957.

⁴ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0558 GMT, January 12, 1957.

details of carrying out economic rehabilitation. According to the Plenum's communique⁵ there were three main features of this plan: (1) restore output to 1939 (i.e. pre-war) levels, (2) strengthen and develop the people's democratic economy and (3) stabilize the economic situation. The aim of developing "the people's democratic economy" was to broaden the socialist sector while "readjusting and transforming" the private sector. It was hoped that progress in this area coupled with the stabilization of the market would eventually permit "planned construction".

In specific terms the 12th Plenum reviewed the main targets of the 1957 State Plan in the following areas: agriculture, industry, communication and postal services, capital construction, commerce, finance, cadre training, culture, education and public health. The exact targets were later enumerated by the Council of Ministers.⁶ In order to achieve them four tasks were marked out for "particular attention":

1. heighten labour discipline, carry out responsibility in production;
2. materialize, step-by-step, the regime of financial autonomy in state-owned factories;
3. launch a movement for "increasing production and practicing economy";
4. work out plans to practice economy, to combat waste and corruption.

⁵Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, April 23, 1957; see also the three main responsibilities listed in the communique of the Council of Ministers as broadcast by Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0430 GMT, April 30, 1957.

⁶ Ibid.

In addition, the following seven areas were designated as "important and urgent problems":⁷

1. strict control of money on hand, financial discipline and the correct implementation of the State Plan for revenues and expenditures;
2. control market prices, combat speculation and hoarding;
3. study the question of the rational use of public servants, work out a plan to gradually readjust their employment;
4. provide jobs for demobilized soldiers and the unemployed;
5. carry out "piecework salary" and increase production bonuses in the factories, at construction sites and on state-farms; subsidize "high-ranking intellectual and technical workers", work out a new wage system;
6. increase ideological, political and organizational leadership in economic and financial areas;
7. strengthen the financial and economic apparatus, promote able cadres to economic and financial organs.

The 12th Plenum also reviewed the role of the army in consolidating national defence in the period since the end of the Resistance War.

⁷ According to the communique of the Council of Ministers: "it is necessary to drastically settle the following present, important and urgent problems: To control closely markets and prices by using all economic, administrative, and cultural measures, to combat speculation and hoarding drastically [sic], study carefully the problem of "p'ien-chih" (Chinese term meaning "table of organization" - Ed.) [sic] and draw up plans for gradual reorganization, to gradually find jobs for demobilized soldiers, regrouped Southern compatriots and jobless people by placing them in the various production enterprises according to a general plan which must be carried out steadfastly, to gradually apply the system of piecework and allowances for increase in production in factories, construction sites and collective farms, to carry on the reasonable readjustment of salaries for cadres and civil servants on the basis of the present salaries regime, to apply a regime of appropriate allowances for intellectual cadres and high-ranking specialists and to continue the building of a new salaries regime". Ibid., in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (May 3, 1957), No.86, p.EEE4.

At present, according to a resolution issued by the Plenum, the main task of the army in the "new stage" is:

To safeguard the cause of consolidating and building up the North in its progressive advance to socialism, to defend the sovereignty, the territory and the security of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, to serve as a prop to the struggle for the consolidation of peace, the reunification of the country, and the completion of independence and democracy all over the country, to be prepared to smash the aggressive plots of imperialism, especially the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys.⁸

In order for the army to carry out these tasks it would be necessary to strengthen the role of the Party in the army and regularize the military forces for garrison duty. In the words of the Plenum's final communique the following tasks needed to be carried out:

The strengthening of political education and ideological leadership in the army, and the active preparation of plans to carry out, step by step, the major objectives affecting compulsory military service, military grades, the military wage system, and commendations and awards.

Increase leadership in the carrying out of policies toward armymen, demobilized armymen disabled servicemen, war martyrs and families of armymen and war martyrs.

Increase the leadership of the Party and the Government in the consolidation of national defence.⁹

In the wake of the 12th Plenum Party leaders convened a series of conferences in April and May at which high-level

⁸Vo Nguyen Giap, "Strengthening National Defence and Building Up The People's Armed Forces", in Third National Congress of the Viet Nam Workers' Party, Documents (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), Vol.3, p.53; and Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 1330 GMT, August 8, 1957.

⁹ See the six points listed in the communique of the Council of Ministers, Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0430 GMT, April 30, 1957.

Party cadres in the military discussed the modernization of PAVN.¹⁰ Not only were specialized branches to be created but a thoroughgoing system of political and ideological controls was to be instituted. In May Generals Nguyen Chanh¹¹ and Nguyen Van Vinh¹² were appointed, respectively, director and assistant director on a new General Directorate of Cadres in the Ministry of National Defense. This directorate was to oversee the political retraining (chinh huan chinh tri) of middle and low level cadres in the army.¹³ Its aim was to ensure the ideological commitment of

¹⁰ "Dai Hoi Dai Bieu Dang Cao Cap Trong Quan Doi La Mot Su Kien Lon Trong Doi Song Chinh Tri Cua Quan Doi Tai Nam Nay", [The Conference of Party Delegates of Various Army Echelons is an Important Event in the Political Life of the Army This Year] Quan Doi Nhan Dan (April 16, 1957), No.335, p.1. "Hoi Nghi Chinh Tri Toan Quan, Da Thao Luan Phuong Cham Va Nhiem Vu Cong Tac Giao Duc Chinh Tri Bao Dam Huan Luyen Quan Su Nam 1957", [The All-Army Political Conference Discussed the Aims and Missions of Political Education Work, Ideological Leadership, Party-Building Tasks and Political Work to Promote Military Training in 1957] Quan Doi Nhan Dan (April 19, 1957), No.336, p.1. Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 1200 GMT, May 14, 1957 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (May 16, 1957), No.95, pp.EEE6-EEE8.

¹¹ "During the Resistance War against the French colonialists he fought in the Nam Bo theatre. He was Chief of Staff of the Nam Bo Command". Who's Who of the Republic of South Viet Nam, op.cit., p.25. According to Working Paper, Appendices, Item 19, p.1., Chanh served in the South as late as 1956.

¹² "Throughout the Indochina War (1946-55), Vinh was active in South Vietnam, where he held senior appointments in the Viet Minh movement. In 1955, he was assigned to Saigon as Head of the North Vietnamese [DRVN] liaison mission attached to the International Control Commission....In 1956, he was promoted to Brigadier-General and in the same year returned to North Vietnam". U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Who's Who in North Vietnam, op.cit., p.331.

¹³ "Thanh Lap Tong Cuc Can Bo Thuoc Bo Quoc Phong Tong Tu Lenh", [Establishment of a General Directorate of Cadres Under the Ministry of National Defence and General Staff] Quan Doi Nhan Dan (May 10, 1957), No.342, p.1.

military personnel in the new stage where the main objectives were "building socialism" rather than "opposing the French".

In June the Party reorganized the army's General Inspectorate, by placing Generals Tran Tu Binh and Phan Trong Tue¹⁴ in command. Binh and Tue were charged with overseeing the implementation of the Party's programs and policies for PAVN as well as the army's "working methods and leadership styles".¹⁵ Both the General Inspectorate for Cadres and the General Inspectorate for the army were responsible for creating an army that was simultaneously "red and expert". In the words on an editorial in the army's newspaper:

The difficulties we presently confront are brought forth by two great contradictions in the building of our army today: the contradictions between the revolutionary situation and tasks of the new period on the one hand and the level of consciousness and thought(s) of cadres and soldiers on the other; and the contradiction between the demands of military modernization on the one hand and the underdeveloped technological level of our army and country on the other. These difficulties have an enduring character

¹⁴ "He [Phan Trong Tue] took part in the Indochina War, and in 1955 emerged as a Brigadier-General and head of the North Vietnamese Army's [i.e. PAVN's] delegation to the Joint Armistice Commission. Subsequently he seems to have been mainly concerned with North Vietnamese [DRVN] policy vis-a-vis the International Control Commission....After his return to North Vietnam, he was named in 1957 as deputy to Brigadier-General Tran Tu Binh, party political commissar at the Infantry Training School, in what was then the newly formed Army Inspection Department". U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Who's Who in North Vietnam, op.cit., p.309.

¹⁵ "Bo Quoc Phong Tong Tu Lenh Re Nghi Dinh Quy Dinh To Chuc Nhiem Vu Va Quyen Han Cua Quan Tong Thanh Tra Quan Doi", [Ministry of National Defence and General Staff Issue Directives Concerning the Organization and Duties of the General Inspectorate of the Army] Quan Doi Nhan Dan (June 21, 1957), No.354, p.1.

and we must be firm and energetic in overcoming them.¹⁶

The political retraining program continued throughout 1957, ending around October. This cleared the decks for an increased concentration on PAVN's "modernization and regularization" a process which accelerated in the following year.

After the 12th Plenum the Party also sought to complete the rectification of errors campaign. Although originally stated to conclude by March 1957, (when the Central Committee met) it continued until November when a series of provincial recapitulation conferences signalled its end. The March plenum had also indicated its concern over public order and security by listing that item as one of the four major tasks to be accomplished in the near-future. The main concern in this area appears to have been with "economic offences" committed by speculators and hoarders. On May 19th it was announced that after an unsuccessful attempt to use "ideological education" that the DRVN government had issued a formal decree making speculation and hoarding a crime punishable by a range of penalties including confiscation, fines, or imprisonment.¹⁷

The decisions of the 12th Plenum were discussed and given approval by the 5th enlarged congress of the Central Committee of the Fatherland Front and the Council of Ministers of the DRVN both of which convened meetings in

¹⁶ "Hay Coi Trong Muc Phan Hoc Tap Nhiem Vu Cong Tac 1957", [Give Attention to Studying the Mission and Tasks for 1957] Quan Doi Nhan Dan (June 18, 1957), No.353, p.1.

¹⁷ Hanoi Radio, 2330 GMT, May 26, 1957 in BBC, Summary of World Broadcasts, Part V (May 30, 1957), No.668, p.46-47.

April.¹⁸ With these plans set in train VWP leaders began to look ahead to the future when economic restoration would be complete and the DRVN could embark on planned economic growth. Of vital importance in drawing up these plans was a knowledge of what outside assistance the DRVN could expect to receive from its socialist allies.

III. PRESIDENTIAL TRAVELS (MAY 1957): DIEM IN WASHINGTON AND VOROSHILOV IN HANOI

On May 12 it was announced that "at the invitation of President Ho Chi Minh, Marshal K.Y. Voroshilov, President of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, will visit the DRVN in the near future".¹⁹ Voroshilov, in fact, had just completed a visit to China and was then touring Indonesia. He arrived in Hanoi on May 20 and departed four days later.

Although Voroshilov's visit was billed as "an important historical event"²⁰ and was accorded much publicity within the DRVN, it would be an error to suggest, as does P.J. Honey, that it marked the beginning of a shift in the DRVN's international orientation away from China and towards the USSR.²¹ Rather Voroshilov's visit brought in its wake an improvement in relations between the USSR and the DRVN

¹⁸ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 0500 GMT, April 15, 1957; and *ibid.* in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0430 GMT, April 30, 1957.

¹⁹ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia 1500 GMT, May 12, 1957. Voroshilov's visit was a state not party visit.

²⁰ Ton Duc Thang writing in Nhan Dan (May 12, 1957) quoted in Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, *op.cit.*, p.50, footnote 4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp.48-50. Honey and others treat Viet-Nam's relations with China and the Soviet Union as if they were a zero-sum game, an assumption which is implicitly challenged in the following analysis.

but not necessarily at the expense of China.

In early 1957 the DRVN shared diplomatic relations mainly with members of the socialist camp.²² The RVN, on the other hand, was making rapid strides in gaining international acceptance.²³ In 1956 Diem had drawn-up a constitution and elected a National Assembly while at the same time achieving domestic stability.²⁴ Because Diem successfully refused to be bound by the terms of the 1954 Geneva Agreements, he had staked out a position from which he could argue that the Republic of Viet-Nam was a sovereign state, independent from North Viet-Nam.²⁵ This was

²² The DRVN had diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level with only 12 countries: China, the Soviet Union, North Korea, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Rumania, Poland, Bulgaria, Albania, Mongolia, and Yugoslavia. In addition "relations" were maintained with India, Canada, Indonesia, Great Britain (whose Consulate was accredited to the port of Hai Phong), Burma and France. Between 1958 and 1960 the DRVN established diplomatic relations with Morocco, Algeria (provisional government), Mali, and Guinea; see: The Democratic Republic of Viet Nam (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1975), pp.184-185; and Fifield, The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia, op.cit., p.343.

²³ The RVN had diplomatic relations (at various levels) with the following countries: the United States, France, Great Britain, West Germany, Italy, Spain, Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the Vatican, Australia, New Zealand, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, Singapore, Republic of China, Thailand, Japan, Philippines, South Korea, Malaya, India, Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey, Lebanon, Brazil and Argentina. See: George L. Harris, et al., U.S. Army Area Handbook for Vietnam, Department of the Army Pamphlet No.550-40 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, September 1962), pp.296-304; and Fifield, The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia, op.cit., p.328.

²⁴ For a general overview of these developments see: J.A.C. Grant, "The Vietnam Constitution of 1956", The American Political Science Review (June 1958), Vol.LII, No.2, pp.437-463. According to Moscow Radio, in Indonesian to Southeast Asia, 1330 GMT, May 18, 1957, "in March last year an election was held in South Vietnam. This divided Vietnam. As you know, following this election a South Vietnamese National Congress [sic] was established, which more permanently divided Vietnam".

²⁵ This was the view that India adopted; see: SarDesai, Indian Foreign Policy, op.cit., p.106.

dramatically indicated on January 23, 1957 when the United States led thirteen other members of the United Nations in sponsoring a resolution calling on the Security Council to recommend the Republics of Viet-Nam and Korea for U.N. membership.²⁶

The Soviet Union, apparently without prior consultation with the DRVN, countered on the following day with a package proposal calling for the admission of North and South Korea as well as North and South Viet-Nam. While the Soviet proposal may have been a deliberate tactical ploy designed to embarrass the U.S., it also implied the existence of two sovereign Vietnamese states.²⁷ From Hanoi's point of view this was totally unacceptable. If the Soviet proposal had been agreed to, for example, all hopes for re-unifying Viet-Nam under the terms of the 1954 Geneva Agreements would have vanished. It is not surprising therefore, that on January 25th Pham Van Dong addressed a letter of protest to members of the U.N. Security Council.²⁸

²⁶ Ibid., p.110. In 1956 the U.N. Security Council recommended for membership in the General Assembly some 20 countries including South Viet-Nam. A Soviet veto barred South Viet-Nam. On January 23, 1957 the question of South Viet-Nam's membership was raised once again as a result of a 13-member resolution in the Special Political Committee of the General Assembly. The question was debated on Cold War lines. The USSR objected to the resolution because it suggested that the Republic of Viet-Nam represented the whole of Viet-Nam.

²⁷ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, July 12, 1956 carries an interview with Ho Chi Minh and the United Press news editor in Tokyo, Leroy Hansen. Asked if he would accept simultaneous membership in the U.N. for the DRVN and the RVN, Ho replied, "Vietnam is a whole from the North to the South. It must be reunified. It cannot be cut in two separate nations any more than the United States can be cut into two separate nations".

²⁸ Pham Van Dong's letter was printed in Nhan Dan (January 27, 1957), No.1058, pp. 1 and 4.

Undoubtedly Dong was in an awkward position as he was unable to criticise the USSR directly.

Five days later the General Assembly's Special Political Committee endorsed the U.S.-backed resolution while at the same time declining to consider the Soviet package deal. On February 28th the U.N. General Assembly carried the matter further when it voted 40 to 8 (18 abstentions) to recommend to the Security Council that the Republic of Viet-Nam be admitted into membership. Once again Dong protested. This time he addressed a letter to the Soviet Union and Great Britain in their roles as co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference.²⁹ This issue was still under consideration at the time of Voroshilov's visit to Viet-Nam.

Fifteen days prior to Voroshilov's arrival in Hanoi, Ngo Dinh Diem embarked on a triumphal state visit to the United States.³⁰ The RVN President was accorded unusual honours for a visiting head of state. President Eisenhower despatched his personal plane, the "Columbine III" to fly Diem and his party from Hawaii to Washington. Also, Eisenhower personally met Diem on arrival in the American

²⁹ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1130 GMT, March 1, 1957; Pham Van Dong also wrote a letter of protest to the French Foreign Minister, see: Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1123 GMT, February 28, 1957. The Vietnamese were also critical of Britain's Foreign Secretary, Selwyn Lloyd when he stated that Britain's policy continued to be based on the 1954 Geneva Agreements including the Final Declaration "insofar as they remain applicable to existing conditions". Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0537 GMT, April 27, 1957.

³⁰ Diem was on an official visit for only three days, May 8-10; he spent an additional 16 days touring the United States. AP dispatches from Saigon and Honolulu in The New York Times (May 6, 1957), p.16.

capital, the second time in four years that Eisenhower had greeted a visiting dignitary in this fashion.³¹ While in Washington, Diem met with the highest U.S. officials and was accorded the honour of addressing a joint sitting of the U.S. Congress. Table 9-1 sets out the highlights of Diem's tour.

From the numerous press reports and public statements made by Diem and U.S. officials, it was obvious that this State visit was arranged to demonstrate the depth of American commitment to the RVN and to President Diem in particular. As one press account noted, U.S. economic aid during the current fiscal year amounted to \$250,000,000 - a sum only exceeded by U.S. contributions (exclusive of military assistance) to South Korea.³² Both Diem and American officials were reportedly eager to increase this amount.³³

In their final communique both Presidents avoided reference to the 1954 Geneva Conference and instead stressed the U.N. Charter and the SEATO Treaty as instruments guaranteeing the future of South Viet-Nam. According to the final communique, for example, Eisenhower and Diem

looked forward to an end of the unhappy division of the Vietnamese people and confirmed the determination of the two governments to work together to seek

³¹ Dispatch by Russell Baker from Washington in The New York Times (May 9, 1957), pp.1 and 16.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.; Dispatch by Russell Baker from Washington in ibid. (May 10, 1957), pp.1 and 12; and AP dispatch from Los Angeles in ibid. (May 20, 1957), p.2. Refer to Table 7-5, the amount of U.S. aid did not increase during 1958-1960.

TABLE 9-1

NGO DINH DIEM'S TOUR OF THE UNITED STATES
(5-19 MAY 1957)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
5 May	Diem and party of ten arrive in Honolulu;
7 May	Diem in San Francisco, meets with officials of Asia Foundation;
8 May	Diem in Washington, met on arrival by President Eisenhower, attends State Department banquet;
9 May	Diem addresses joint meeting of U.S. Congress, lunches with Vice President R.M. Nixon, holds talks with Eisenhower and Secretary of State J.F. Dulles, visits Supreme Court, J.F. Dulles hosts State dinner;
10 May	Diem addresses National Press Club, confers with Pentagon officials, talks with Dulles, Diem hosts banquet at R.V.N. Embassy which is attended by President Eisenhower;
12 May	Diem begins 3-day visit to New York City, lunches with J.D. Rockefeller, 3rd., awarded honorary degree at Seton Hall University by Archbishop of Newark;
13 May	Ticker-tape parade through New York City, press conference, luncheon with Mayor Wagner of New York, reception held by Council on Foreign Relations, dinner hosted by American Friends of Viet-Nam and International Rescue Committee;
14 May	Attends Mass with Cardinal Spellman, attends luncheon hosted by Far Eastern Council of Commerce and Industry;
15-16 May	Diem visits Detroit, addresses industrial leaders, receives honorary degree from Michigan State University;
17-18 May	Diem visits Los Angeles, addresses Council on World Affairs;
19 May	Diem flies to Honolulu, departs from U.S.

SOURCE: The New York Times (5-20 May 1957).

suitable means to bring about the peaceful reunification of Viet-Nam in freedom in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter (emphasis added).³⁴

After referring to an alleged build-up of military forces in North Viet-Nam and an increase of "Communist subversive capabilities in this area [i.e. Southeast Asia]" the communique alluded to article four of the SEATO Treaty to affirm

that aggression or subversion threatening the political independence of the Republic of Viet-Nam would be considered as endangering peace and stability. The just settlement of problems of the area by peaceful and legitimate means within the framework of the United Nations Charter will continue to be the mutual concern of both governments (emphasis added).³⁵

Remarkably the coincidence of Voroshilov's State visit to Hanoi and Diem's visit to Washington has been overlooked by the few sources covering this period. In

³⁴ "Text of Eisenhower-Diem Statement", The New York Times (May 12, 1957), p.25.

³⁵ Ibid.; Article 4 paragraph one states: "Each Party recognizes that aggression by means of armed attack in the treaty area against any of the Parties or against any State or territory which the Parties by unanimous agreement may hereafter designate, would endanger its own peace and safety, and agrees that it will in that event act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes. Measures taken under this paragraph shall be immediately reported to the Security Council of the United Nations". Point two declares: "If, in the opinion of any of the Parties, the inviolability or the integrity of the territory or the sovereignty or political independence of any Party in the treaty area or of any other State or territory to which the provisions of paragraph one of this Article from time to time apply is threatened in any way other than by armed attack or is affected or threatened by any fact or situation which might endanger the peace of the area, the Parties shall consult immediately in order to agree on the measures which should be taken for the common defense". The DRVN's reaction to the Eisenhower-Diem communique may be found in Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0505 GMT, May 15, 1957.

other words, one explanation for Voroshilov's sojourn to Hanoi may well have been to counterbalance the effects of Diem's tour of the United States by shoring up the DRVN's international prestige.³⁶

Voroshilov was accompanied on his tour by three Soviet officials: S.R. Rashikov, Vice President of the presidium of the USSR's Supreme Soviet and President of the Uzbek Republic's Supreme Soviet; V.P. Yelyutin, Minister for Higher Education; and N.T. Fedorenko, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister. Rashikov had accompanied Mikoyan on his visit to Hanoi in April 1956. The delegation's schedule (see Table 9-2) and the public speeches made by the two Presidents indicated that there were at least three main reasons for the visit: (1) to discuss increased Soviet aid; (2) to discuss the prospects for Viet-Nam's reunification and (3) to discuss problems of bloc unity.

Throughout Voroshilov's visit Ho Chi Minh continually expressed Vietnamese gratitude for Soviet economic and cultural aid.³⁷ No doubt Ho and other DRVN leaders impressed upon their Soviet guests the need for trained Vietnamese specialists.³⁸ If so this possibly accounts for the inclusion of the Russian Minister for Higher Education

³⁶ Cf. comments by Izvestia as quoted by a special dispatch from Moscow in The New York Times (May 26, 1957), p.20.

³⁷ Vietnam News Agency in English Morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, May 20, 1957 contains the text of Ho's welcoming speech. For agreements signed earlier in the year refer to Table 9-5.

³⁸ In May of 1955 there were only 23 engineers in all of North Viet-Nam; Fall, "A 'Straight Zigzag': The Road to Socialism in North Viet-Nam", op.cit., p.211.

TABLE 9-2

DETAILS OF PRESIDENT VOROSHILOV'S VISIT TO THE DRVN
(20 - 24 MAY 1957)

<u>Date - Time</u>	<u>Event</u>
20 May 9:45 am	Voroshilov and party of three arrive in Hanoi, met at airport by Ho Chi Minh, exchange welcoming speeches;
4:00 pm	Voroshilov calls on Ho Chi Minh at President's House;
8:00 pm	Ho Chi Minh hosts banquet for Voroshilov, both presidents give public speech;
21 May 6:30 am	Voroshilov and Ho Chi Minh address mass rally of 100,000 in Hanoi,
8:00 am	Soviet-Vietnamese Friendship meeting, Voroshilov receives delegation representing the Vietnamese people, gives public speech,
6:30 pm	Ho Chi Minh calls on Voroshilov
pm	Vice Premier Phan Ke Toai hosts reception for Voroshilov, Premier Pham Van Dong reported ill;
22 May am	Voroshilov visits engineering works under construction in Hanoi,
pm	Voroshilov takes sightseeing tour of Vietnamese capital, visits Jade mountain and Lake of Restored Sword,
pm	Rashikov, U.S.S.R. Vice President, and Yelyutin, U.S.S.R. Minister of Higher Education, visit the port of Hai-Phong;
23 May am	Voroshilov and Ho Chi Minh address gathering at Hanoi Central University, Voroshilov hosts meeting with Russian specialists serving in Viet-Nam,
pm	Voroshilov hosts reception for Ho Chi Minh at Soviet Embassy in Hanoi;
24 May	Voroshilov and delegation seen off at airport by Ho Chi Minh.

SOURCES: TASS (20-23 May 1957), The Times of Vietnam (1 June 1957), The New York Times (21 May 1957) and Vietnam News Agency (20-24 May 1957).

and the visit to Hanoi Central University by the two Presidents.³⁹ Although no public statements were made at this time it is also possible that Ho Chi Minh appraised Voroshilov of Viet-Nam's developmental prospects, including a forthcoming three-year plan which would lay the foundation for building socialism in the DRVN.

According to Donald Zagoria,

As prospects of early reunification faded, Hanoi had to come to grips with its acute economic problems. No longer able to count on incorporating the rice-rich South into its economy, it began to look for alternative sources of foodstuffs for the North and to lay the groundwork for a self-sustaining economy. It now came to believe that its best hope for eventual reunification lay in building up its own strength....

In this situation, it was both necessary and logical for the DRV to turn to the Soviet Union. DRV requests were met with surprising alacrity by Moscow, despite the fact that the Soviet Union was already cutting down on its aid to China. Thus, then Soviet chief of state Klement Voroshilov went to Hanoi in May, 1957, and generously proffered offers of Soviet assistance to the Northern economy....A month later Ho Chi Minh toured Eastern Europe for the purpose of soliciting aid. Within a year the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe had replaced China as the principle source of economic aid to the DRV.⁴⁰

It was not until later in the year however that significant amounts of Soviet began to reach Viet-Nam.⁴¹ In

³⁹ Voroshilov also held a meeting with Soviet specialists serving in the DRVN. Paradoxically Dan Nguyen [Saigon] (April 30, 1957) reported the closure of the USSR's Consulate in Hai-Phong at this time. According to this report the decline in the number of Russian ships arriving was the reason. Dan Nguyen also claimed that Czech technicians were replacing Soviet technicians who were in the process of leaving. Quoted in "Soviets Close Consulate in Haiphong", The Times of Viet Nam Weekly (May 4, 1957), Vol.2, No.17, p.5.

⁴⁰ Zagoria, Vietnam Triangle, op.cit., p.102. See also: Fifield, The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia, op.cit., pp.337-338; Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, op.cit., pp.50-56; and Turner, Vietnamese Communism, op.cit., p.292.

⁴¹ Turley, "Army, Party and Society in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam", op.cit., p.125, footnote 83.

brief, during 1957 the Soviet Union approved of Viet-Nam's three-year plan of socialist construction and decided to support it with much needed assistance funds.

The issue of Viet-Nam's unification was a continual theme in public remarks by Voroshilov and Ho Chi Minh. Although no public reference was made to Soviet diplomatic moves at the United Nations it would be remarkable if the issue was not touched upon in private. The speed of reunification was no longer as pressing a matter between the two parties as in the past, mainly because the Vietnamese had reconciled themselves to a prolonged resolution of this matter.⁴² It appears clear from Voroshilov's remarks that the USSR was anxious to keep developments in Viet-Nam peaceful. For example at a reception in his honour on May 20th he stated:

The Soviet people, like the fraternal people of China and all the peoples of the socialist countries, from the bottom of their hearts wish to see the successful realization of the legitimate aspirations of your people [i.e. peaceful reunification].

Acting on instructions of their foreign masters, the South Vietnamese authorities are inimical to the Geneva Agreements. But it is to be hoped that the popular masses in South Viet-Nam, all the progressive forces, including sober minded politicians, who are not blinded by hatred for Communism, will unite on the basis of the nationwide urge for a peaceful and democratic reunification of Vietnam. The Soviet Union has insisted and continued to insist on the unconditional implementation of

⁴² On the occasion of May Day 1957 Ho Chi Minh reiterated once again, "[o]ur people's struggle for the reestablishment of normal relations between the North and the South, for the implementation of the Geneva Agreements, and the reunification of the country is a revolutionary, long and hard struggle". Vietnam News Agency in Vietnamese morse to Vietnam, 0937 GMT, April 30, 1957.

the Geneva Agreements.⁴³

In an address before representatives of the Vietnamese people on May 21st and perhaps as a result of talks with Ho Chi Minh and the VWP officials, Voroshilov appeared to acknowledge the potential dangers if the issue of reunification were not resolved. Nevertheless he failed to modify his Government's past position. In his words:

This policy ["pursued by the reactionary circles of South Vietnam...of undermining the Geneva Agreements and implementing the aggressive design of U.S. imperialist quarters"] runs fundamentally counter to the interests of the popular masses of South Vietnam. There is no doubt that the policy of trampling underfoot the Geneva Agreements and obeying foreign orders now pursued by the South Vietnamese authorities is a threat to peace not only in Vietnam but throughout Southeast Asia.

We note with a feeling of profound satisfaction that the DRV Government, expressing the will of all the Vietnamese people, is unflinchingly conducting a policy of strict adherence to the Geneva Agreements, a policy directed toward the peaceful reunification of the country in a democratic way....

Although you are still faced with not a few difficulties, it is beyond doubt that the Vietnamese people will succeed in making their beautiful motherland into a highly developed and rich country. We understand your difficulties, because the Soviet Union has itself overcome tremendous difficulties in the struggle for freedom and the construction of socialism (emphasis added).⁴⁴

The Soviet Union's views on Viet-Nam were part of a larger global policy which stressed peaceful coexistence with the West. According to Voroshilov:

⁴³ TASS (Moscow) in English hellschreiber to Europe, 2045 GMT, May 20, 1957; this passage was singled out by the Vietnam News Agency for special emphasis, Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, May 21, 1957. Voroshilov, it should be noted, spoke of "Soviet people" not "Soviet government".

⁴⁴ TASS (Moscow) in Russian hellschreiber to Europe, 1220 GMT, May 21, 1957.

The foreign policy of our country aims at easing world tensions and preventing a new war. We are together struggling for collective security and peaceful coexistence among all nations...The people of our two countries are struggling to urge reduction of armament and armed forces, and a strict ban on hydrogen and atomic weapons and on the testing of these weapons.⁴⁵

As we have noted previously in our discussions of the CPSU's 20th Congress, Khrushchev had formulated the so-called peaceful or parliamentary path to socialism in 1956.

Other events at this time no doubt encouraged the Soviets in this view. Prior to arriving in Viet-Nam, for example, Voroshilov visited Indonesia where the Communist Party (PKI) had made a strong electoral showing in late 1956.⁴⁶ Although excluded from the government PKI officials were appointed to the 45-member advisory National Council on March 6th, 1957 following the resignation of the Ali Sastroamidjojo cabinet. In May Voroshilov and Sukarno both toured Java and although the Russian President refrained from endorsing the PKI publicly, his presence had a favourable effect on PKI support in the ensuing local elections held between June-August.⁴⁷

In April 1957 the Soviet parliamentary path to socialism seem vindicated by the electoral victory of the

⁴⁵ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1144 GMT, May 20, 1957.

⁴⁶ Herbert Feith, "Indonesia", in Kahin, editor, Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia, op.cit., pp.205-209.

⁴⁷ Leslie Palmer, Communists in Indonesia: Power Pursued in Vain (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press-Doubleday, 1973), pp.180-181; Fifield, The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia, op.cit., p.146; and Hinton, Communist China in World Politics, op.cit., pp.81-82. In September 1956 Sukarno visited the USSR and the Soviet Union awarded Indonesia US\$100 million in aid.

Communist Party in the Indian State of Kerala. Meanwhile in Laos progress was being made in the negotiations between the Royal Lao Government and the Pathet Lao. The general agreements of August 1956 (which called for the inclusion of Pathet Lao representatives in a National Union Government) were followed by joint discussions of the details in January of the following year.⁴⁸

Apparently Voroshilov was quite emphatic in recommending a policy of peaceful coexistence to the Chinese during his visit in April 1957. According to Harold Hinton:

When Soviet Chairman Voroshilov visited the CPR [Chinese People's Republic] in April, 1957, CPR leaders made several references to the possibility of friendly relations with the Nationalists [on Taiwan], to one of which Voroshilov replied, 'Cooperate permanently'.⁴⁹

The problem from the Vietnamese point of view was not entirely one of accepting this Russian assessment as their own, but rather one of insuring that the 1954 Geneva Agreements were not forgotten altogether. The reason for this had been spelled out countless times by DRVN officials and

⁴⁸ Martin E. Goldstein, American Policy Toward Laos (Teaneck, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1973), pp.110-112 and 114.

⁴⁹ Hinton, Communist China in World Politics, op.cit., p.32; this was at a time when the Chinese Communists were offering the olive branch to Taiwan. Hinton writes, "[i]ndividual Nationalist personnel were offered amnesty, jobs on the mainland, the right to revisit their original homes, and even the right to return to Taiwan". He also points out that "[t]he original version of Mao Tse-Tung's speech on 'Contradictions' of February 27, 1957 (but not the edited version published on June 18, 1957), is believed to have said that relations with the Nationalists might be brought within the 'nonantagonistic' category". The Chinese swing to the left in foreign policy was still in a period of gestation.

was once again reiterated prior to Voroshilov's visit. On the occasion of May Day 1957 for example, Premier Pham Van Dong stated:

The Geneva Agreements are being seriously undermined. The U.S. imperialists and their henchmen have been striving to turn South Vietnam into a U.S. colony and military base. The entire Vietnamese people, Northern and Southern alike, must heighten their vigilance, broadly and closely unite within the Vietnam Fatherland Front so as to continue to carry out the Geneva Agreements and steadily maintain the legal basis of the revolutionary struggle for national reunification (emphasis added).⁵⁰

The Vietnamese were evidently successful in obtaining Soviet agreement to publicly endorse the "strict implementation" of the 1954 Geneva Agreements as the above-cited remarks by Voroshilov attest. Even further, the Soviets continued to exercise their Security Council veto to block U.N. membership for the RVN while at the same time dropping their four-nation package deal.⁵¹ No doubt

⁵⁰ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0533 GMT, May 1, 1957. This viewpoint was restated by Pham Van Dong on the eve of Voroshilov's arrival; see Dong's interview with J.M. Hermann, president of the International Organization of Journalists in Nhan Dan (May 16, 1957) as carried by Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0532 GMT, May 16, 1957.

⁵¹ "In early May, Diem paid a state visit to the U.S., where he received assurances of continued strong U.S. support. Whatever its reasons, the Soviet [sic] thereupon took a position against the admission to the UN of South Vietnam..." from "Hanoi and the Insurgency in South Vietnam", in United States-Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab.3, p.50; In September 1957 To Quoc [Fatherland] was reported as hailing the "recent" Soviet veto of South Viet-Nam's application for UN membership, Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, September 18, 1957; at the same time Pham Van Dong sent a letter of protest to the United Nations, Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, September 7, 1957; on October 25, 1957 the UN General Assembly voted 49-9 (with 23 abstentions) to affirm the RVN's eligibility for membership. The USSR once again cast its veto; see: AP dispatch in The Times of Viet Nam (December 11, 1958), Vol.2, No.275, pp.1 and 4.

the Soviet delegation detected Hanoi's disappointment that the USSR was unwilling to pursue the question of Vietnamese reunification with vigour. On the other hand it seems unlikely that the Soviet Union would have been upset to learn of the VWP's new long-range strategy embodied in "Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam". Over the course of the next year both the DRVN and USSR were in general agreement that reunification was not an immediate prospect and that the consolidation of the North deserved priority over armed liberation of the South.

The other area of discussion between Ho Chi Minh and Voroshilov touched on issues relating to the socialist bloc arising in part from the events in Hungary and Poland in 1956.⁵² For obvious reasons the content of these discussions remained undisclosed. Voroshilov's public reference to China as a world power ("without whose participation not a single major international problem, especially in the Far East and Asia can be solved today")⁵³ indicates that the two presidents may have discussed the PRC's new leadership role within the socialist camp. Chou En-Lai, it will be recalled, had undertaken a ten-day tour through Russia, Poland, and Hungary in January 1957.⁵⁴ As a result of subsequent announcements it seems probable that Voroshilov

⁵² This was alluded to by Ton Duc Thang who wrote in Nhan Dan that Voroshilov's visit would also contribute to the further strengthening of the socialist system; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0512 GMT, May 12, 1957.

⁵³ TASS (Moscow) in Russian hellschreiber to Europe, 1220 GMT, May 21, 1957.

⁵⁴ Mehnert, Peking and Moscow, op.cit., pp.362-373; and Zagoria, The Sino-Soviet Conflict, op.cit., pp.61-62.

and Ho Chi Minh discussed the latter's projected tour of Eastern Europe scheduled for July and Vietnamese participation in Moscow's celebrations marking the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution.⁵⁵

In summary, Voroshilov's visit to the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam was significant because it marked a continuation of a trend which witnessed increased Russian awareness of Viet-Nam's importance both in its own right and as a member of the socialist bloc. It was only in 1958, after embarking on a three-year plan of socialist construction and after receiving large amounts of Soviet and Eastern European aid, that the DRVN was officially designated as "building socialism".⁵⁶ In the wake of the Russian President's visit, the DRVN was to enlarge its international contacts. In July 1955 Ho Chi Minh visited Russia and China. The following year witnessed visits to Hanoi by Mikoyan (April 1956) and Chou En-Lai (November 1956). In 1957 not only did K. Voroshilov, President of the presidium of the USSR's Supreme Soviet, visit Hanoi but a whole parade of East European delegations visited the Vietnamese capital. In return Ho Chi Minh made an extended tour of Eastern Europe as well as attending the highly important Moscow Conference in November 1957. These and other contacts enabled the VWP leadership to pursue their goal of "winning the sympathy and support of the world's

⁵⁵ A thirty-six man committee was set up at this time to plan for the celebrations of the 40th anniversary of the Socialist October Revolution; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1127 GMT, June 6, 1957.

⁵⁶ Cameron, "The Soviet Union and Vietnam", op.cit., p.199.

people" outlined in "Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam".

IV. WINNING SYMPATHY AND SUPPORT: THE DRVN'S FOREIGN RELATIONS DURING 1957-58

A. INTRODUCTION

As we noted in chapter six the VWP leadership, faced with de facto division of their country devised a new three-pronged strategy to replace their earlier policy of reliance on the 1954 Geneva Agreements and the 1955 program of the Fatherland Front.⁵⁷ The three prongs consisted of (1) maintaining and developing the revolutionary movement in the South (2) consolidating the North and (3) winning international support for the cause of Vietnamese unity. The last two prongs were obviously interrelated, especially in the area of foreign affairs, as VWP officials insisted that membership in the socialist camp was fundamental to achieving their objectives.

In 1957 the DRVN initiated a wide-ranging series of international contacts, mainly with fellow-members of the socialist camp but also with friendly Asian States. There were three major aspects of this: (1) major delegations were invited to Hanoi; (2) the DRVN President, Ho Chi Minh, made three important trips overseas and, (3) the DRVN widened

⁵⁷ DRVN officials nevertheless continued to emphasize the importance of both documents in public announcements; see Ta Quang Buu, DRVN Vice Minister of National Defence, on the legal aspects of the Geneva Agreements, Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0525 GMT, July 24, 1957. For a restatement of the importance of the Fatherland Front see the editorial in Nhan Dan entitled "Our People Will Triumph" carried by Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 0500 GMT, August 28, 1957.

its state ties with a number of countries by negotiating a series of economic and cultural agreements.

B. MAJOR DELEGATIONS TO HANOI

Beginning in March 1957 Hanoi hosted the first of fifteen important overseas delegations which visited the Vietnamese capital between then and the end of 1958. As Table 9-3 indicates DRVN officials received major delegations from the following members of the socialist camp: Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania and North Korea. Delegations from non-Communist Indonesia,⁵⁸ Burma⁵⁹ and India⁶⁰ were also received. Among the important non-governmental visitors were: a Burmese peace committee,⁶¹ a delegation from the French trade union movement⁶² and representatives of the provisional government of Algeria.⁶³

⁵⁸ "Nhiet Liet Chao Mung Vi Su Gia Cua Nhan Dan Nam-Duong Anh Hung", [Warm Welcome to the Messenger of the Heroic Indonesian People] Nhan Dan (August 5, 1957), No.1245, pp.1 and 4. The Indonesian delegation (see Table 9-3) came at the invitation of Ton Duc Thang, chairman of the DRVN's National Assembly; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0532 GMT, 0605 GMT, August 5, 1957; 0500 GMT, August 6, 1956; and 0651 GMT, August 11, 1957.

⁵⁹ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0555 GMT, August 15, 1957.

⁶⁰ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0620 GMT, 1238 GMT, September 12, 1957.

⁶¹ The Burmese Peace Committee stopped in Hanoi enroute home after attending a conference in Stockholm; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1133 GMT, September 2, 1958.

⁶² Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0541 GMT, December 25, 1957.

⁶³ Vietnam News Agency, December 16, 1958.

TABLE 9-3

MAJOR DELEGATIONS RECEIVED BY THE DRVN (1957-58)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Delegation</u>
17-20 March '57	V. Siroky, Premier of Czechoslovakia
3-6 April '57	J. Cyrankiewicz Chairman of Polish Council of Ministers
20-24 May '57	K. Voroshilov President of Supreme Soviet Presidium
5-11 August '57	D. Sartono Speaker of the Indonesian Parliament
15 August '57	Thakin Tin Maung deputy speaker of the Chambers of Nationalities, Burma
1-4 September '57	S. Vukmanovic-Tempo Vice-President Yugoslav Federal Executive Council
12-14 September '57	Dr. S. Radhakrishnan Indian Vice President
6-9 October '57	A. Yugov Chairman of Council of Ministers, Bulgaria
18-26 October '57	USSR Parliamentary delegation led by, A.B. Aristov, Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee and member of the Legislative Commission
24 December '57	B. Frachon Secretary of C.G.T.; a French trade union
7-24 January '58	French Communist Party delegation led by J. Vermeersch
23-27 March '58	C. Stoica Chairman, Rumanian Council of Ministers
1 September '58	U. MyoMying Secretary General of the Burmese Peace Committee
9-14 October '58	V. Chervenkov Vice Chairman of Bulgarian Council of Ministers
22 October '58	Balluku, Albanian Minister of National Defense
28 November '58 - 2 December '58	Kim Il-sung President of the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea
*(4-6 November '58)	*(Syngman Rhee, President of the Republic of Korea visits South Viet-Nam)
13-15 December '58	Delegation of Provisional Government of the Republic of Algeria

An analysis of the composition of the various socialist delegations and the public announcements, including joint declarations and final communiques, indicates the following reasons for their visits: (1) an improvement in state-to-state relations, (2) increased aid, trade and cultural ties (3) and liaison between officials of their respective ruling parties. The Czechoslovak, Polish, Russian, Yugoslav, Bulgarian, Rumanian and North Korean delegations were led by either the chairman or vice-chairman of their respective governmental institutions (Council of Ministers, Federal Executive Council; see Table 9-3). Their trips to Hanoi were part of a mutual exchange of visits with Ho Chi Minh and without exception marked a first in state-to-state relations.

With the exception of the USSR Parliamentary group, all other state delegations included the Minister of Foreign Affairs or a senior representative from that department.⁶⁴ These officials held discussions with their Vietnamese counterparts on the world situation as well as specific items of mutual interest. In this way the DRVN traded endorsements with the Eastern European countries; these usually took the form of accepting the USSR's foreign policy themes on peaceful coexistence and disarmament as well as acknowledging the importance of the 1954 Geneva

⁶⁴ Only Yugoslavia failed to include its minister; Foreign Affairs was represented by V. Velebit, the foreign affairs under-secretary. Viet-Nam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0632 GMT, September 1, 1957.

Agreements.⁶⁵ No doubt the Czech and Polish officials discussed Ho Chi Minh's forthcoming visit to their countries. The Yugoslavs, now back in the Soviet Union's "good graces", probably arranged for accreditation of an ambassador.⁶⁶

The Czech, Polish and Bulgarian delegations, by their size and composition, were obviously concerned with trade and mutual assistance. All three delegations included their respective Minister for Foreign Trade. The Czech and Polish delegations, the largest to visit Viet-Nam also included a variety of senior ministers concerned with such areas as art and culture, finance, construction, public health, industry and economic planning (the details may be found in Table 9-4). As a result of joint negotiations between the visiting delegations and their Vietnamese counterparts three major agreements were reached. On March 20, 1957 Czechoslovakia and the DRVN signed a five-year contract on cultural cooperation which provided for the exchange and publication of technical materials as well as for the exchange of cultural, educational, scientific and sporting

⁶⁵ Ho Chi Minh's speech on National Day, after returning from his trip, included the following: "[a]s regards the international situation, we have entirely agreed on the necessity to struggle for the defense of a lasting peace and for the settlement of all international problems through peaceful negotiations; on the necessity to struggle for the materialization of the principles of peaceful coexistence, disarmament, the setting up of systems of collective security in Europe and Asia, and the ban on the use of atomic and hydrogen bombs". Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, September 2, 1957.

⁶⁶ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0655 GMT, 0719 GMT, April 6, 1957; and Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1135 GMT, January 11, 1958.

groups.⁶⁷ Poland agreed to step up its economic assistance to the DRVN,⁶⁸ while Bulgaria and North Viet-Nam negotiated an agreement on the exchange of goods and payments for 1958. Under the terms of this agreement Bulgaria would supply chemicals, textiles, electrical equipment, pharmaceutical products and consumer goods to Viet-Nam in exchange for mining, farm and handi-craft products.⁶⁹

A third significant aspect was the inclusion of the secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in the delegations from Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Russia and North Korea. On the occasion of the visit by the Russian Parliamentary delegation it was reported that members of this group called on the VWP Politburo.⁷⁰ It is therefore probable that senior Party officials of the visiting delegation took the opportunity to hold discussions with their VWP counterparts.⁷¹ It also seems likely that VWP participation in the national Party congresses of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria were touched upon

⁶⁷ The agreement provided for the exchange and publication of scientific and research documents, for the exchange of scientific, cultural, educational, and sports and physical cultural delegations, for the exchange of students, and for cooperation between the press, broadcasting and cinematographic institutions; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, C540 GMT, March 20, 1957.

⁶⁸ Associated Press dispatch from Hong Kong quoting Radio Hanoi in The New York Times (March 31, 1957), p.34.

⁶⁹ Vietnam News Agency, October 9, 1957.

⁷⁰ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, October 19, 1957.

⁷¹ In March 1958 members of a Rumanian delegation called upon their VWP counterparts; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0509 GMT, March 24, 1958.

at this time.⁷² The visit to Hanoi by a DPRK delegation led by Kim Il-Sung may have had a secondary purpose of balancing the visit to Saigon by South Korean President Syngman Rhee three weeks earlier.⁷³ In January 1958 the VWF hosted its first official visit by a fraternal Party when a three-member French Communist Party group toured the DRVN.⁷⁴ No doubt the de facto division of Viet-Nam coupled with an approved three-year program of socialist construction (see below) and Ho Chi Minh's long association with international communism combined to boost the VWP's role in the socialist camp. This new involvement was to occur simultaneously with the growing Sino-Soviet rift.⁷⁵

⁷² Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, June 15, 1958.

⁷³ Dispatch from Seoul in The New York Times (November 5, 1958), p.7; Associated Press dispatch from Saigon in ibid. (November 7, 1958), p.3; Vietnam News Agency, November 28, 1958 and KCNA dispatch, December 2, 1958 in BBC, Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 5 (December 9, 1958), No.826, pp.36-39.

⁷⁴

Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, 0531 GMT and 0552 GMT, January 8, 1958; 1127 GMT and 1245 GMT, January 9, 1958; and 0500 GMT, January 24, 1958.

⁷⁵ There was a fourth aspect to the DRVN's externalization efforts: the use of a variety of semi-official organizations to conduct relations. In 1957-58 this feature was in its embryonic stage; in later years the use of semi-official organizations was to assume greater importance. At this time the following delegations travelled overseas: in December 1957 a delegation of the Vietnamese Committee for Asian Solidarity attended the Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference in Cairo; a delegation representing the Vietnam Peace Committee attended the Stockholm Congress for Disarmament and International Cooperation in July 1958 and a three-member group from the Vietnam-Soviet Friendship Association toured the USSR in July-August, 1958. See: Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1115 GMT, December 11, 1957; 1120 GMT, June 30, 1958; and 1204 GMT, July 28, 1958.

C. HO CHI MINH'S TOURS OVERSEAS

During 1957-58 President Ho Chi Minh undertook three major tours overseas: (1) to Korea, China, Russia and Eastern Europe (July-August 1957), (2) to Moscow for the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution (discussed separately) and (3) to India and Burma (February 1958). Ho's trip in July-August 1957 was an unprecedented 55-day sojourn through eleven nations comprising the socialist camp: China, Korea, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria and Rumania (see Table 9-5).

Ho Chi Minh's delegation included Hoang Minh Giam, the Minister of Culture; Hoang Van Hoan, a member of the VWP Politburo and Pham Ngoc Thach, the Vice-Minister of Public Health.⁷⁶ This composition suggests, especially in light of the forthcoming Moscow anniversary celebrations, that the DRVN delegation's primary purposes were fourfold: (1) to enhance the prestige and international standing of the DRVN and to forge closer state-to-state ties with the other members of the socialist camp;⁷⁷ (2) to negotiate and coordinate various types of cultural, scientific and economic assistance to Viet-Nam⁷⁸ (3) to obtain endorsement

⁷⁶ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 2245 GMT, June 30, 1957 and Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, July 3, 1957.

⁷⁷ Ho Chi Minh extended invitations to a number of Heads of State and senior government officials to visit Viet-Nam (Kim Il-sung, Zawakdski, Dieckman, Tito and Yugov); Nhan Dan (August 24, 1957) in BBC, Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 5, (August 29, 1957), No.694, p.51.

⁷⁸ "Ho's Travels", The Economist (July 27, 1957), Vol.184, p.300; Fifield, The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia, op.cit., p.338; Zagoria, Vietnam Triangle, op.cit., p.102; Turner, Vietnamese Communism, op.cit., pp.292-293; and Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, op.cit., pp.50-51.

for the reunification of Viet-Nam under the terms of the 1954 Geneva Agreements⁷⁹ and (4) to discuss relations among socialist countries,⁸⁰ especially in light of events during 1956. This latter possibility is suggested by the presence of Hoang Van Hoan, a specialist in international relations. Hoan was the DRVN's first diplomatic representative to the PRC. He served in Peking first as a minister (1950-52) and then as ambassador (1952-57). Hoan also served concurrently as the DRVN's ambassador to Mongolia and North Korea, posts to which he was appointed in 1955 and 1958 respectively. Hoan was also a member of the DRVN delegation to the 1954 Geneva Conference. During 1954-57 he represented the VWP at congresses of the Mongolian, North Korean and Chinese communist parties.⁸¹

Hoang Minh Giam and Pham Ngoc Thach also shared an expertise in foreign affairs. Both attended the Bandung Conference in April 1955. Giam, a close intimate of Ho Chi Minh,⁸² served as the DRVN's foreign affairs minister from

⁷⁹ Associated Press dispatch from Berlin in The New York Times (July 29, 1957), p.4; and Vietnam News Agency in English Morse to Southeast Asia, 1150 GMT, August 15, 1957.

⁸⁰ Obviously this issue was important given the Hungarian Uprising of 1956. Equally important was Yugoslavia's path of national independence. Press accounts of Ho's visit raised the possibility that he might mediate between Albania and Yugoslavia; Dispatch by Harrison E. Salisbury from Belgrade in The New York Times (August 6, 1957), pp.1 and 2; and United Press dispatch from Belgrade in ibid. (August 10, 1957), p.6.

⁸¹ U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Who's Who in North Vietnam, op.cit., p.123.

⁸² Both of them were born in Nghe An province. Giam served as an intermediary for Ho in his discussions with the French in September, 1945. He was also a member of the DRVN delegation to the Fontainebleau Conference in July 1946; ibid., pp.99-100.

1947 to August 1954. Prior to embarking on this trip he led a DRVN delegation to Cambodia to attend the celebrations marking Buddha's 2,500th birthday.⁸³ Thach gained experience in international relations when he accompanied Ho to Peking and Moscow in mid-1955.

It is beyond the scope of this section to examine in detail the relations between Viet-Nam and each country on Ho Chi Minh's itinerary.⁸⁴ Our purpose here is to record the dramatic way in which VWP leaders set about ending Viet-Nam's relative isolation from her major allies. As we have already noted this diplomatic offensive was linked to a three-pronged policy designed to achieve the eventual reunification of Viet-Nam.⁸⁵ As a result of Ho Chi Minh's

⁸³ Ibid., p.100; Giam also endorsed a call for the convening of a second Bandung-type conference. Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0530 GMT, April 19, 1957.

⁸⁴ In fact it would be extremely difficult to do so given the gaps in the radio monitoring reports. This would, however, be an interesting area for future research for someone with the capability to exploit Eastern European sources. See the following: President Ho Chi Minh's Friendly Visit to the People's Democratic Republic of Korea (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House [FLPH], 1958); President Ho Chi Minh's Friendly Visit to the Republic of Czechoslovakia (Hanoi: FLPH, 1958); President Ho Chi Minh's Friendly Visit to the People's Republic of Poland (Hanoi: FLPH, 1958); President Ho Chi Minh's Friendly Visit to the German Democratic Republic (Hanoi: FLPH, 1958); President Ho Chi Minh's Friendly Visit to the Hungarian People's Republic (Hanoi: FLPH, 1958); President Ho Chi Minh's Friendly Visit to the People's Republic of Albania (Hanoi: FLPH, 1958); and President Ho Chi Minh's Friendly Visit to the People's Republic of Rumania (Hanoi: FLPH, 1958). Each of these pamphlets contains the text of speeches exchanged, a description of Ho's tour and a copy of the joint communique; they were located in the Southeast Asia Reading Room Pamphlet File, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

⁸⁵ "I wish also to let you know that during our recent visit, we have paid attention to the struggle for national reunification of the Korean and German peoples. What we should learn from them is that these two brotherly peoples are now

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tour at least four major socialist governments sent high-level delegations to Hanoi: the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Rumania. (see Table 9-4). In addition, the DRVN matched and perhaps exceeded the RVN in cementing overseas contacts (Diem visited the U.S., Thailand, Australia, South Korea, India and the Philippines during the same time span; see Table 9-5). In 1959, a delegation representing the DRVN National Assembly toured five Eastern European countries (Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria and Poland).⁸⁶

Although Viet-Nam had little success in attracting recognition from outside the Communist bloc, Ho Chi Minh nevertheless achieved success with the Asian neutralist states. During the period February 4-17, 1958 the DRVN President led a four-member delegation on a state tour to India and Burma.⁸⁷ Ho's visit to India complemented New Delhi's earlier recognition of Ngo Dinh Diem in November

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engaged in actively building the North of Korea and East Germany respectively, that they have obtained numerous successes, and that each of these successes in the peaceful building of their fatherland has an obvious influence on the whole country and on the struggle for national unity". "Full text of speech by Ho Chi Minh on 12th Anniversary of Founding of D.R.V.N. delivered at meeting in Ba Dinh Square, 2 September", Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, September 2, 1957 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (September 3, 1957), No.170, pp.EEE1-EEE8.

⁸⁶ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0533 GMT, May 14, 1958; and 0555 GMT, August 3, 1958.

⁸⁷ The delegation included: Ho Chi Minh, Phan Ke Taoi, deputy prime minister; Pham Hung, minister attached to the premier's office; Phan Anh, minister of commerce; and Hoang Minh Giam, minister of culture. Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, February 4, 1958.

TABLE 9-4

THE COMPOSITION OF THE SOCIALIST DELEGATIONS TO THE DRVN (1957-58)¹

<u>Position</u>	<u>CSR</u>	<u>PPR</u>	<u>BPR</u> ²	<u>USSR</u> ³	<u>DPRK</u>	<u>PRR</u>	<u>YFR</u>
Council of Ministers	X	X	2 ^b	X ^c	X	2 ^e	X
Foreign Affairs	X	X	X	-	X	X	X
Secretary of Party's CC	X	-	X	X ^c	X	-	-
Foreign Trade	X	X	X	-	-	-	-
Diplomatic	X	2 ^a	X	-	X ^d	X	-
Art and Culture	-	X	-	-	X ^d	-	-
Education	-	X	-	-	X ^d	-	-
National Defence	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
State Planning Board	X	-	-	-	-	-	-
Finance	X	-	-	-	-	-	X ^f
National Construction	X	-	-	-	-	-	-
Public Health	X	-	-	X	-	-	-
Local Economy	X	-	-	-	-	-	-
Light Industry	-	X	-	-	-	-	-
Parliamentary	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Size of Delegation	10	8	6	6	6	4	3

ABBREVIATIONS: Bulgaria (BPR), Czechoslovakia (CSR), North Korea (DPRK), Poland (PPR), Rumania (PRR), the Soviet Union (USSR) and Yugoslavia (YFR).

X = one person
CC = Central Committee

¹ Albanian Military Delegation (October 1958) not included.

² There were two Bulgarian delegations; these figures are for the first (October 6-9 1957). The second delegation was led by V. Chervenkov, vice chairman of the Council of Ministers and it visited Viet-Nam during October 9-14, 1958.

³ Voroshilov's visit (May 20-24, 1957) is not included as it is discussed in detail in the text. This column provides information on the USSR Parliamentary Delegation which visited from October 18-26, 1957.

^a Two individuals were included in this category: the Ambassador to Viet-Nam and the Charge d'Affaires a.i. to China.

^b This includes A. Yugov and G. Traikov, chairman and first vice chairman of the Council of Ministers, respectively.

^c A.B. Aristov, member of the legislative commission of the USSR and secretary of the CPSU Central Committee and I.K. Lebedev, member of the legislative committee of the USSR and first secretary of the Stavropol committee of the CPSU.

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TABLE 9-4 cont'd

^d Lee Il-Kyong, Minister of Education and Culture.

^e C. Stoica and E. Bodnaras, chairman and vice chairman of the Council of Ministers, respectively.

^f V. Guzina, governor-general of the National Bank.

TABLE 9-5

OVERSEAS TOURS BY PRESIDENTS HO CHI MINH AND NGO DINH DIEM (1957-58)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Country</u>	
	<u>Ho Chi Minh</u>	<u>Ngo Dinh Diem</u>
May 1957	-	U.S.A.
June	-	-
July	People's Republic of China North Korea Soviet Union Czechoslovakia Poland East Germany	-
August	Hungary Yugoslavia Albania Bulgaria Rumania Soviet Union People's Republic of China	Thailand
September	-	Australia South Korea
October	-	-
November	Soviet Union	India
December	-	-
January 1958	-	-
February	India Burma	-
March	-	Philippines

1957.⁸⁸ At this time India had accepted the reality of Vietnamese partition and began to implement a more even handed approach. Nevertheless, the VWP leadership valued India's role on the ICC, especially in Laos. Ho Chi Minh sought and obtained Indian support for Viet-Nam's re-unification but the Indians failed to condemn either the RVN or the United States for the present state of affairs.⁸⁹ According to the text of the joint statement signed by Ho and Nehru:

The President and Prime Minister re-affirmed the hope expressed by the co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference in 1956 that 'the International Supervisory Commission will persevere in their efforts to maintain and strengthen peace in Viet-Nam on the basis of the fulfilment of the Geneva Agreements on Viet-Nam with a view to the re-unification of the country through the holding of the nation-wide elections in Viet-Nam under the supervision of an International Commission'. In this connection, the President and the Prime Minister stressed the need for promotion of mutual understanding between the two zones in Viet-Nam in accordance with the purposes and provisions of the Geneva Agreements.⁹⁰

After completing his 10-day tour of India, Ho Chi Minh flew to Burma where he was greeted by President U Win Maung and Premier U Nu. Once again Ho obtained general support for the re-unification of Viet-Nam under the terms

⁸⁸ Dispatch from New Delhi in The New York Times (February 6, 1958), p.3, reports that Ho received precisely the same welcome accorded Diem the previous November (1957).

⁸⁹ SarDesai, Indian Foreign Policy, op.cit., pp.111-112.

⁹⁰ "The Text of the Joint Statement By The Prime Minister of India and The President of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam in New Delhi on February 13, 1958", in Foreign Policy of India, op.cit., pp.327-328; and dispatch from New Delhi in The New York Times (February 14, 1957), p.2.

of the 1954 Geneva Agreements.⁹¹ On his return to Hanoi the DRVN President announced that presidents Prasad of India and U Win Maung, had accepted invitations to visit North Viet-Nam.⁹²

D. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

The third major aspect of Viet-Nam's policy of "winning the sympathy and support of the world's people" concerned obtaining much needed foreign assistance to help in economic rehabilitation and reconstruction. During 1955-57 Viet-Nam managed to obtain a grant of US\$200 million from China and a Soviet aid package totalling US\$119.5 million (of which US\$19.5 million were credits). The lion's share was obtained as a result of Ho Chi Minh's visits to Moscow and Peking in 1955. During 1957-58, the DRVN negotiated over eighteen separate agreements and protocols governing various types of cultural and economic assistance (see Table 9-6). Both China and the Soviet Union figured prominently in these agreements. The former agreed to

⁹¹ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1140 GMT, February 18, 1958; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0541 GMT, 0550 GMT, February 15, 1957; and 0623 GMT, 1100 GMT, February 16, 1957. Ho Chi Minh, "Talk at a press conference in Rangoon", in Selected Works, op.cit., Vol.4, pp.295-300. President Ho Chi Minh's Visit to the Republic of India and the Union of Burma, February 4th-17th, 1958. Official Documents (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1958). There is no evidence to support the assertion made by Hoang Van Chi that Ho Chi Minh had to cut short his visit to Burma because of a successful propaganda campaign highlighting the failures of the DRVN's land reform launched by RVN officials against him; see: Letter from Hoang Van Chi dated December 20, 1972, to Daniel Teodoru reprinted in "The Human Cost of Communism in Vietnam, II - The Myth of No Bloodbath", op.cit., pp.46-47.

⁹² Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1225 GMT, February 17, 1958. Prasad visited both the RVN and the DRVN in March 1959; SarDesai, Indian Foreign Policy, op.cit., p.194.

TABLE 9-6

DRVN Trade and Aid Agreements Negotiated During 1957-58

<u>Date</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Country</u>
1957 ^a	Credit agreement for spare parts (\$12m)	USSR
13 Feb. 1957 ^b	Agreement on cultural co-operation in 1957	USSR
20 Mar. 1957 ^c	5-year cultural co-operation agreement	Czechoslovakia
29 Mar. 1957 ^d	Aid agreement	Poland
30 Mar. 1957 ^e	Cultural co-operation in 1957	China
30 Jul. 1957 ^f	Trade agreement; protocol on aid	China
31 Jul. 1957 ^g	Agreement on cultural collaboration	East Germany
2 Aug. 1957 ^h	Agreement on cultural collaboration for 1957	Hungary
8 Oct. 1957 ⁱ	Exchange of goods and payments agreement	Bulgaria
25 Dec. 1957 ^b	Agreement on cultural co-operation in 1958	USSR
12 Mar. 1958 ^j	Credit agreement for spare parts (\$5m); Protocol and trade agreement for 1958; Navigation agreement	USSR USSR USSR
31 Mar. 1958 ^k	Aid protocol for 1958 Exchange of goods and payments agreement Agreement on assistance in 18 industries	China China China
24 Nov. 1958 ^l	Protocol on cultural co-operation	Albania
29 Dec. 1958 ^m	Trade protocol for 1956-60	USSR*

*Other agreements negotiated with Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Rumania in January 1959.

SOURCES:

^a Charles B. McLane, "The Russians and Viet-Nam: Strategies of Indirection", op.cit., p.60.

^b Vietnam News Agency in English Morse to Southeast Asia, 1130 GMT, December 27, 1957.

^c Ibid. in English Morse to Southeast Asia, 0540 GMT, March 20, 1957.

^d AP dispatch from Hong Kong in The New York Times (March 31, 1957), p.34.

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TABLE 9-6 cont'd

SOURCES cont'd:

^e Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1175 GMT, March 30, 1957.

^f Ibid., July 31, 1957. Dispatch from Hong Kong in The New York Times (August 1, 1957), p.2.

^g President Ho Chi Minh's Friendly Visit to the German Democratic Republic (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1958), p.4.

^h President Ho Chi Minh's Friendly Visit to the Hungarian People's Republic (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1958), p.24.

ⁱ Vietnam News Agency, October 9, 1957.

^j Ibid., in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, March 13, 1958.

^k Ibid., in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0575 GMT, April 1, 1958.

^l Ibid., November 25, 1958.

^m Ibid., December 30, 1958.

supply raw cotton, textiles, medicines, rubber tyres, vehicles, rolled steel and machinery in exchange for Vietnamese timber, farm products and minerals.⁹³ The Soviet Union, for its part, agreed to provide petroleum products, fertilizers, laminated ferrous metals, cotton yarn, electrical appliances, machine tools, cars, lorries, tractors and farming machinery. In return Viet-Nam exported rice, bananas, tea, coffee, plywood, clothing and footwear, jute and handcrafts.⁹⁴

In the second triennium (1958-50), while Viet-Nam was pursuing her first Three-Year Plan, Soviet aid rose a modest US\$13.5 million to US\$133 million (all in credits) while Chinese assistance fell by half to US\$100 million (of which only US\$25 million was in the form of an outright grant).⁹⁵ Credits from Eastern Europe totalled US\$26 million.⁹⁶ Thus by the end of 1960 the DRVN received economic aid amounting to at least US\$578.5 million; this compares to US\$1,393.1 million, the amount of aid the U.S.

⁹³ Dispatch from Hong Kong in The New York Times (August 1, 1957), p.2; and Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0545 GMT, April 1, 1958.

⁹⁴ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, March 13, 1958; and 0500 GMT, December 30, 1958.

⁹⁵ This was at a time when the USSR cut its aid to China. China was about to embark on the Great Leap Forward; Harold C. Hinton, An Introduction to Chinese Politics (Melbourne: Wrenn Publishing Pty. Ltd., 1973), pp.39-40.

⁹⁶ Kaye, "A Bowl of Rice Divided", op.cit., Table 4, p.115. Kaye, who is listed as a "specialist in Asian and Communist agrarian problems", has been identified elsewhere by Bernard Fall as a British economist; Fall, "A 'Straight Zigzag': The Road to Socialism in North Viet-Nam", op.cit., p.222, footnote 27.

gave to the Diem regime during the same period (1955-60).⁹⁷

According to DRVN figures foreign aid in fact represented an ever-diminishing share of its national budget: 65.3% in 1955; 40% in 1956; 60.8% in 1957; 31.3% in 1958; 27% in 1959 and 17.7% in 1960.⁹⁸

V. CONSOLIDATING THE NORTH: THE 7th SESSION OF THE DRVN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (10-19 SEPTEMBER 1957)

The 7th Session of the DRVN's National Assembly was originally scheduled to convene in July 1957. However, due to severe flooding caused by typhoons this meeting had to be postponed until September.⁹⁹ In the interim the Council of Ministers took charge of urgent government business. Ho Chi Minh's long overseas tour coincided with this period and it is possible that the National Assembly also delayed opening until the nation's president returned. One of the first tasks of this session was to review the decisions taken by government leaders since the previous session and to hear Ho Chi Minh's report on his overseas tour.

As we have noted previously the "consolidation of the north" was the first of three major missions assigned by the

⁹⁷ Montgomery, The Politics of Foreign Aid, op.cit., p.284. These figures are for the total amount of economic aid (grants and loans). It is unknown how much military assistance the DRVN received during this period.

⁹⁸ Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, op.cit., p.177. Alternate figures for 1955 and 1959 are 38.6% and 36.9% respectively. According to Fall the discrepancy lies in two sets of figures released by the DRVN, one set in 1960 and the other in 1962. The latter figures, which Fall considers more realistic, are cited in the text.

⁹⁹ Voice of Vietnam dictation in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 2330 GMT, September 5, 1957.

VWP at its 11th Plenum in December 1956. This preoccupation was clearly evident in the work of the Council of Ministers throughout 1957. In late June the Council met to consider reports by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Water Conservation and Reconstruction. The budget for fiscal year 1956 received approval as did the draft budget for 1957. According to the communique issued by the Council, the financial situation in 1957 was "critical" and balancing the 1957 budget was declared to be "fundamental...to the completion of the 1957 State Plan".¹⁰⁰ The Council also called upon all levels and branches of government to pay special attention to the following eight areas:

1. financial affairs
2. tax collection
3. commercial activities related to basic construction
4. accurate inventory and evaluation of property
5. expenditures (to eliminate waste)
6. market and financial management
7. lowering the price of staple commodities
8. speculation and hoarding

After hearing a report from the Ministry of Water Conservation and Reconstruction on the advanced preparations to meet typhoon flooding during the coming rainy season, the Council of Ministers declared that the struggle against flooding "is one of the most important works at the moment".¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 2245 GMT, June 30, 1957.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., the report indicated that the repair of dykes and culverts had not been completed as planned.

In July, in the face of severe typhoon damage the next scheduled session of the National Assembly was postponed. Nevertheless the Fatherland Front managed to convene its Sixth Session (enlarged) at which time it heard reports on the domestic situation. It endorsed draft legislation establishing the government's policies toward businessmen and industrialists as well as towards intellectuals.¹⁰² It also approved plans to combat typhoon flooding. As if to underline the spirit of the times the resolution of the Front's Sixth Session declared that the achievements obtained in the peaceful reconstruction of the North were fundamental and that short-comings were but local and temporary.¹⁰³

In August the Council of Ministers met to consider three reports dealing with internal matters. The first, by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, stated that drought had affected certain areas of the countryside and that this would hamper the autumn rice production plan. Accordingly, the Council declared:

¹⁰² The Party's policy towards intellectuals was published in Nhan Dan on August 29, 1957; see Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, August 29, 1957. Special attention was focused on this group in the wake of "The Nhan Van - Giai Pham Affair". On the 12th anniversary of Resistance Day (for Nam Bo) Pham Thieu, a professor, addressed 200 intellectuals on the role of southern intellectuals in the national revolutionary movement; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0525 GMT, September 24, 1957. These moves were part of a concerted VWP policy to mobilize the energies of so-called revolutionary intellectuals. See: Fall, "A 'Straight Zigzag': The Road to Socialism in North Viet-Nam", op.cit., p.218; and Nhu Phong, "Intellectuals, Writers and Artists", op.cit., pp.84-87.

¹⁰³ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0534 GMT, March 19, 1958.

The fight against drought must be considered a very urgent task, while flood-prevention work must not be neglected. According to the area and actual conditions, other tasks such as the correction of mistakes, collection of taxes must be coordinated with the work of struggling against drought and preventing floods. When floods and drought become serious, all other work may be stopped to permit consolidation of forces. (Emphasis added)¹⁰⁴

The second report was presented by the Central Land Reform Committee. It dealt with the rectification of errors campaign in general and with reclassification of individuals into correct classes and the restitution of property wrongly confiscated in particular. According to this report "the correction of mistakes has been completed in a number of regions and the majority of villages have entered the last phase of [mistakes] correction work".¹⁰⁵ The Council of Ministers approved the report but recommended that certain supplementary measures involving the restitution of property be carried out. The Premier was given the responsibility for issuing appropriate instructions.

The final report presented by the Ministry of National Defence concerned itself with various aspects of regularizing the army (i.e. various rules and regulations concerning military obligations, terms of service and army communications). The Council approved the draft law on national service and decided to implement it on an experimental basis in Vinh Phuc province. Various draft regulations presented by the military received Council approval.

In August 1957 only one-quarter of a year remained of the DRVN's three-year period of economic rehabilitation. At that

¹⁰⁴ Vietnam News Agency in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 0955 GMT, August 28, 1957.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

time Nguyen Van Tran, deputy director of the State Planning Board, took stock of the situation and declared that although the enormous devastation caused by years of war had not been entirely overcome that success ("in the main") had been achieved in meeting the goals of the economic recovery plan. Food production had been increased, dykes and other irrigation systems had been rebuilt and hundreds of miles of railway lines had been repaired. Tran also thanked the fraternal countries for their assistance.¹⁰⁶ This then was the background to the 7th Session of the DRVN's National Assembly which met from September 10-19, 1957.

The National Assembly's 7th Session, coming as it did more than five months after the previous plenary session of the VWP's Central Committee (March 1957) was not convened especially to serve as a sounding board for newly ratified Party policies which affected the state sphere of interest. Rather, the National Assembly was called into session to tidy up the outstanding problems which would face DRVN officials in the final quarter of the year. Of the eleven major reports delivered to the Assembly, nine dealt with domestic affairs (see Table 9-7). The other reports concerned Ho Chi Minh's overseas tour and the current situation in Nam Bo.

As the final resolutions of the 7th Session made clear, the task of economic rehabilitation was almost but not quite complete. Only another three months in the year remained to overcome shortcomings, a period of sufficient length to enable

¹⁰⁶ Dispatch from Hong Kong in The New York Times (August 18, 1957), p.15; and An Outline History of the Viet Nam Workers' Party, op.cit., pp.84-85.

TABLE 9-7

MAJOR REPORTS DELIVERED TO THE 7th SESSION OF THE DRVN'S
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (SEPTEMBER 1957)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Content of Report</u>
Ho Chi Minh	DRVN President	State tour of Eastern Europe
Ton Quang Phiet	Vice-chairman of the National Assembly's Standing Committee	Activities of the Standing Committee since the 6th Session
Tran Huy Lieu	Secretary of the Committee to Amend the Constitution	Report on activities of Committee to Amend the Constitution
Phan Anh	Minister of Commerce	Decree banning speculation and hoarding
Cuu Huy Can	Vice Minister of Culture	Decree on the press and other publications
Vu Dinh Hoe	Minister of Justice	Decree on law-breaking and corporal punishment
To Quang Dau	Vice Minister of the Interior	Decree on elections to people's councils and administrative councils at all levels
Nguyen Van Tao	Minister of Labor	Draft law on trade unions
Nguyen Duy Trinh	Head, Home Affairs Committee in Premier's office	Rectification of land reform errors
Le Van Hien	Minister of Finance	1956 budget and 1957 draft budget
Pham Hung	Minister attached to the Premier's office	The situation in Nam Bo

SOURCES:

Vietnam News Agency English Morse to Southeast Asia, 0606 GMT, September 10, 1957; 1201 GMT, September 10, 1957; 1100 GMT, September 11, 1957; 0538 GMT and 1215 GMT, September 13, 1957; and 0525 GMT, September 14, 1957.

the VWP delegation to the Moscow Conference of Communist Parties (November 1957) to make a favourable report on progress in the DRVN. Once these details were cleared up the DRVN could embark on an ambitious three-year plan of economic development. To quote from the final resolutions of the National Assembly's 7th Session:

After hearing the government report on the realization of the State Plan during the first six months of 1957...the National Assembly of the DRVN made the following resolutions:

1. The National Assembly welcomes the industriousness, the zeal, the endurance and the determination to overcome all difficulties of the compatriots and cadres who, in their efforts to realize the 1957 State plan, have achieved many new gains and have brought the basic completion of the economic restoration in the North nearer and nearer to final success. At the same time, the National Assembly has realized that there were shortcomings in the realization of the state plan during the first six months of 1957 - a number of monthly and quarterly plans have not been wholly completed either in quality or quantity.
2. The National Assembly agrees to charge the government with readjusting a number of points in the plan for the fourth quarter of 1957...The public services should try to develop their strong points....
3. The National Assembly appeals to all people and cadres...to basically complete the restoration phase, make preparations for the development phase, bring the North nearer and nearer to socialism and turn it into a powerful base for the struggle for national unification.¹⁰⁷

Pham Hung's report on the situation in Nam Bo was a wide-ranging view of developments there. This report gave no hint, however, that the Politburo had made any alteration to the strategy outlined in "Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam".¹⁰⁸ In

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.; and Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 1130 GMT, September 20, 1957.

¹⁰⁸ It would appear that there was a meeting of the Politburo in September as one source reports that Le Duan was admitted at that time; "Hanoi and the Insurgency in South Vietnam", in United States-Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book IV.A.5. Tab 3, p.50.

fact Hung's review appeared to confirm the Party's expectations of how events would unfold. For example, in his account of the economic, cultural and social situation, Hung stressed that increased U.S. aid and trade had harmed local industry by creating "a flood of imports five times greater than exports" which caused massive unemployment.¹⁰⁹ The RVN budget, he observed, was top heavy with expenditures in the security and military fields, land reform was described as "capitalist style exploitation in the countryside". In brief, according to Hung "[t]he U.S. imperialists and the Ngo Dinh Diem clique are striving to doll up and give a false appearance of prosperity to the South Viet-Nam society, which is filled with acute contradictions".

By way of contrast Pham Hung highlighted developments in the North where, he pointed out, progress had been made in expanding industrial and agricultural output.¹¹⁰ Hung also stressed the tremendous contributions made by the regroupees

¹⁰⁹ Pham Hung's speech was broadcast in three parts: Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0538 GMT and 1215 GMT, September 13, 1957 and 0525 GMT, September 14, 1957 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (September 17, 1957), No. 180, pp. EEE4-EEE10. Unattributed quotations in the following paragraphs are taken from this source.

¹¹⁰ Hung claimed that 4 million tons of paddy had been produced in 1956. This compares with a pre-war level (i.e. 1939) of 2.4 million; see Table 6-1.

in achieving these ends.¹¹¹ According to Hung all this was evidence that "our regime is a regime of peace, construction, and creative labor and that of the U.S.-Diem clique is a regime of aggression, exploitation, and pauperization". Hung then returned to a familiar theme:

the strength of solidarity and struggle of the entire people from North to South Vietnam is a decisive strength in the struggle for unity...People in South Vietnam have constantly followed and sought to acquaint themselves with the situation in the North. Every new success obtained in the consolidation of North Vietnam has exerted a great influence on all sections of the Southern compatriots, making them more elated and confident in the movement of patriotic struggle.

¹¹¹ Le Son Hong, a defector from the DRVN, reported that in October 1957 there was discontent among Southerners who wanted to return home. He mentioned a motion passed by members of 108 Regiment of the 305th Division; "An Officer of the Viet Cong People's Army Seeks Freedom in the South", The Times of Viet Nam (October 23, 1957), Vol. 1, No. 20, p.1, and Vietnam Press dispatch in ibid. (November 5, 1957), Vol. 1, No. 30, p.2. Other reports of southern discontent appear in Dinh Xuan Cau's The Way to A Lasting Peace in Vietnam, ms. RAND Document (April 2, 1969), p.64, "[b]esides, ill-concealed miseries, such as the famine of 1956 and the general impoverishment of the people, had made them [southern regroupees] depressed and angry to such an extent that some of them began to talk about a coup d'etat. This plot was quickly uncovered and repressed. As an immediate consequence, a great number of these desperate regroupees deserted the army. Since they could not go South, they rallied in the northern areas of Yen Bay province, some 150 miles northwest of Hanoi where they live [sic] as a self-ruling group". According to the forward of this study, written by William Taylor, Mr Cau is the "most experienced member of Rand's staff of Vietnamese interviewers" in Dinh Tuong province. Cau's account was based on interviews with prisoners and defectors. It is extremely difficult to assess the evidence that there was widespread discontent among the regroupees. The DRVN media did stress visits by senior PAVN officers to southern units at this time; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0523 GMT, August 27, 1957; Hanoi Radio in Vietnamese, 0200 GMT, December 30, 1957.

The third section of Pham Hung's report dealt with the struggle movement in Nam Bo. There, as we have observed in Chapter 8, the Party was experiencing a brief period of recovery. Hung's optimism reflected these developments:

Since early this year, though repressed, imprisoned, and even barbarously murdered by the South Vietnam authorities, the Southern people, in the cities as well as in the countryside, have valiantly struggled under effective slogans and various forms [of protest]. In the cities, workers have struggled for wage increases, for real trade union freedom, and against dismissal of employees. Last month alone more than 100 struggles were launched in various parts of South Vietnam. Twelve thousand workers at the Dalat, Kontum, Pleiku, and Banmethuot tea plantations have demanded wage increases and better living conditions. In the countryside, the South Vietnam peasants, basing themselves upon the agrarian reform laws of the Southern authorities, have struggled for their rights to land and against persecution, aggression and exploitation.

During the same period the most active and wide struggle has been that of the laboring people and forced evacuees against forced eviction from houses, burning of houses [by RVN officials], and drafting of slave laborers to plantations. The assistance movement for victims of eviction and burning of houses in Saigon has drawn broad masses of Catholic evacuees and created further difficulties for Diem's dislodgement [read: refugee resettlement] plan.

Small dealers in various South Vietnam markets also demanded reduction and suppression of taxes and fines. Industrialists and traders in South Vietnam, who had clearly realized the true nature of the U.S.-Diem regime, have urged restrictions of importation and development and effective assistance to home trade and industry...Religious sects in South Vietnam have also united and struggled for the preservation of their religion and peace.

Hung concluded his remarks with an analysis of U.S. military involvement in the South. There, he pointed out, the U.S. had tightened its hold over the army by firstly, expelling pro-French officers and, secondly, by making ARVN dependent on U.S. aid. Hung noted the increasing numbers of senior American military officials who marched through Saigon as well as the more permanent presence of MAAG, TRIM (redesignated Combat Army Training Organization, CATO) and the Joint Services Support,

a logistics advisory unit assigned to ARVN. With respect to the American funded construction of roads and airfields, Hung charged that these were part of a plan to transform "the high plateaus in South Central Vietnam into a strategic center of South Vietnam and Southeast Asia as well".¹¹²

The ultimate aim of all of this, according to Hung, was "to turn South Vietnam into a de facto member of the aggressive SEATO bloc". He analysed recent events in this way:

Since the beginning of this year South Vietnam has participated in a conference of this bloc [SEATO] in Canberra and in the military exercise 'Astra' of this bloc in the Thailand Gulf. It has also sent a military delegation to attend the military display in the Philippines and another to attend the U.S. nuclear tests in Nevada. Together with these facts, the joint declarations of Ngo Dinh Diem and U.S. President Eisenhower, his recent visits to Thailand and Australia, and his forthcoming visit to South Korea have brought to light the plot of the U.S. imperialists and their followers to drag South Vietnam into the aggressive SEATO bloc.

The 7th Session of the DRVN's National Assembly ended its deliberations on September 19th in the shadow of the 12th anniversary of the South Viet-Nam Resistance Day (23rd September 1945). The DRVN-VWP leadership chose to use this occasion to recall the lessons of the past and to relate them to the present. One of the most important commentaries was made by Vo Nguyen Giap before a crowd of 10,000 in Hanoi.¹¹³ With obvious parallel to the present day, General Giap

¹¹² Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0525 GMT, September 14, 1957, part 3, p.EEE9.

¹¹³ Ton Duc Thang addressed an audience at the municipal theatre in Hanoi the night before; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0522 GMT, September 23, 1957. Pham Hung wrote a front page article in Nhan Dan entitled, "Phat Trien Truyen Thuong Doan Ket Dau Tranh Anh Dung Va Tinh Than Tu Luc Canh Sinh Cua 'Nam-bo Khang Chien'" [Develop the Traditions of Unity and the Spirit of Heroic Struggle on the Anniversary of the Nam Bo Resistance] (September 29, 1957), p.1. General Giap's speech was broadcast by the Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese, 0430 GMT, September 24, 1957 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (September 26, 1957), No. 187, p.EEE2-EEE10.

recounted the early years of resistance in the South and the contributions made by northern volunteers.¹¹⁴ He also stressed the role of the Party and resistance bases in maintaining the revolutionary movement in adverse conditions.¹¹⁵

As a result of these factors coupled with the concept of unity ("unity means strength and unity has led our resistance to success") Giap drew the following conclusion:

The long-term resistance of the people of the South and throughout the country can express one idea: Vietnam is one; and the Vietnamese people are one. No one, no reactionary force can divide them. It at the same time expresses our dearest aspiration: Vietnam must be independent, the fatherland must be unified.¹¹⁶

In speaking of the present Giap indirectly quoted from a VWP Central Committee resolution to indicate the strategy for the future:

114 "Many heroic youths of the North volunteered to join the troops of the South to exterminate the enemy. Many units of the liberation troops were sent from the north and central Vietnam to participate in the fighting in the South", *ibid.*, p.EEE3.

115 Among the base areas Giap mentioned the following: U Minh forest, Plaine des Joncs, the 5th Interzone, the highlands of south central Vietnam, and Binh-Tri-Thien (shortened from Quang Binh, Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces). Concerning adverse conditions Giap commented: "Nam Bo was far from the central government. From the objective point of view, we were weak, while the enemy had favorable conditions". Later he said, "at that time, the communication lines were cut, and the various fronts were isolated, so the Vietnamese people and troops in the South had to fight under extremely hard conditions"; *ibid.*, pp.EEE3-EEE4.

116 Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese, 0430 GMT, September 24, 1957. Unattributed quotations in the text are taken from this source.

The partition of our country requires from us the responsibility of strengthening our unity to struggle for national unification. As pointed out by the resolutions of the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party, our struggle for peoples' liberation has not been terminated. While we are endeavouring to build the North into a socialist country, we have also the responsibility of uniting our entire people to carry on our struggle for the completion of the people's democratic national revolution throughout the country and to realize national unification on the basis of independence and democracy through peaceful means. (emphasis added)

In the past, our compatriots from North to South united to acquire independence and unification for our country. Now under new historic conditions, we have shifted from an armed struggle to a political one. But the struggle for national unification remains the common responsibility of all our compatriots. Our entire people from the North to the South - workers, farmers, intellectuals, school children, traders and industrialists - without distinction of race or religion, should thoroughly understand their responsibility toward the struggle for national unification and should unite more closely to struggle against every plot aimed at sabotaging peace and partitioning the country and for the holding of a pre-electoral consultative conference to discuss national unification and correct implementation of the Geneva Accords.

General Giap concluded his speech by noting that Viet-Nam's struggle for national liberation was occurring in a "new phase of a new historic era" in which the national liberation movement was in the ascendancy and colonialism on the decline. He pointed out that the paths of armed struggle and political struggle had enabled many countries (China, India, Indonesia, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Egypt, Sudan, Morocco and Tunisia) to overthrow colonialism and advance toward "socialism or to bourgeois democratic regimes". As for Viet-Nam, General Giap concluded, it would benefit from the previous phase of armed struggle, which successfully liberated the North. The North would now serve as the "firm and powerful base for the revolution throughout the country". Within two months the

issue of which path - peaceful struggle or armed violence - would occupy the attention of leaders of Communist parties from all over the world as they assembled in Moscow for the 40th anniversary celebrations of the Soviet October Revolution.

VI. CRISIS IN THE NORTH? (MAY-DECEMBER 1957)

According to P.J. Honey the final months of 1957 witnessed a crisis within the highest ranks of the VWP as a pro-Chinese faction desperately tried to halt Viet-Nam's drift away from Peking and towards Moscow.¹¹⁷ Honey's account of this period deserves close attention as his assumptions and argumentation have been accepted, often uncritically, by other scholars.¹¹⁸ In brief, Honey's analysis of events during this period has generally been regarded as definitive since they were first published in 1962.¹¹⁹

Honey based his interpretation on one major premise: that the VWP Politburo was divided into two major factions, one headed by Vo Nguyen Giap and the other by Truong Chinh. The major issue separating these two protagonists was their alleged ideological alignment towards the Soviet Union and China respectively. This cleavage was further deepened by personal antagonisms.¹²⁰ Personality clashes among other

¹¹⁷ Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, op.cit., pp.48-58.

¹¹⁸ For example: Bernard B. Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, op.cit., p.198; Lacouture, Ho Chi Minh, op.cit., pp.254-56; "Hanoi and the Insurgency in South Vietnam", in United States-Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab 3, p.50; and N. Khac Vien, Vision Accomplished? The Enigma of Ho Chi Minh (New York: Collier Books, 1971), pp.278-82.

¹¹⁹ P.J. Honey, "The Position of the DRV Leadership and the Succession to Ho Chi Minh", The China Quarterly (January-March 1962), No. 9, pp.24-36; it was later reprinted in Honey, editor, North Vietnam Today, op.cit., pp.47-59.

¹²⁰ Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, op.cit., pp.29-32.

members of the Politburo also contributed to the formation of these factions.¹²¹ Honey has characterized the VWP's factionalism in this way:

Truong Chinh and Nguyen Duy Trinh would seem to head a faction of the leadership which is more formally disposed towards China than Russia, while Vo Nguyen Giap and Le Duan head a second, which tends to look to Moscow. Le Duc Tho, because of his long-standing differences with Le Duan, may be expected to lend his support to Truong Chinh, while Pham Van Dong, who indicated that he was not an enthusiastic supporter of the pro-Chinese line and sought to reduce Truong Chinh's influence in the Politburo by sponsoring Pham Hung's membership will probably emerge on the side of Vo Nguyen Giap. Le Thanh Nghi and Hoang Van Hoan do not seem to have played a decisive role in the formulation of DRV policy...¹²²

Elsewhere Honey had placed Nguyen Chi Thanh in Truong Chinh's camp.¹²³ Table 9-8 sets out this alignment in chart form.

According to Honey the years prior to 1956 were a period of predominant Chinese influence over the VWP.¹²⁴ Not only had the PRC provided considerable support during the anti-French resistance but China had followed through with economic assistance afterwards. Such external support reinforced Truong Chinh and his pro-China group within the VWP Politburo in the conduct of such Chinese-styled programs as land reform and the "Hundred Flowers" campaign. In Honey's view:

By the end of 1956 it must have been obvious to the DRV leaders that the period of Chinese predominance in North Vietnam was nearing its end. The Soviet Union would have to be brought more into the picture. Although such a change in foreign relationships was made imperative by economic needs, there are good reasons for believing that other considerations as well made it welcome. Chinese Communist policies had

¹²¹ Ibid., p.35, particularly between Le Duan and Le Duc Tho.

¹²² Honey, editor, North Vietnam Today, op.cit., p.58.

¹²³ Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, op.cit., pp.30-31.

¹²⁴ Ibid., pp.43-47.

TABLE 9-8

LEADERSHIP ALIGNMENT OF THE VWP POLITBURO (1957)

<u>Pro-Soviet</u>	<u>Pro-Giap</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Pro-Chinh</u>	<u>Pro-China</u>
Vo Nguyen Giap		Ho Chi Minh		Truong Chinh
	Le Duan	Le Thanh Nghi	Le Duc Tho	
	Pham Van Dong	Hoang Van Hoan	Nguyen Chi Thanh	
	Pham Hung			Nguyen Duy Trinh
		*Tran Quoc Hoan		
		*Hoang Quoc Viet		

* alternate members

SOURCES:

P.J. Honey, Communism in Viet-Nam, pp.19-39.

P.J. Honey, ed., North Vietnam Today, pp.54-59.

not only proved unpopular with the people of North Vietnam, they had also proved to be highly unsuccessful. Doubtless, land reform of some kind would have to be carried through, but the particularly brutal form imposed on the North Vietnamese by the Chinese had inflicted serious damage upon the prestige of the Lao Dong Party and upon the authority of the Communist regime. More antagonisms had been created by the census campaign, and opposition to the regime openly revealed by the 'Hundred Flowers' campaign was so strong that it is regarded with some apprehension even today [i.e. in 1963].¹²⁵

As a result of errors committed during the course of the land reform campaign Truong Chinh lost his post as VWP Secretary-General. He was officially replaced by Ho Chi Minh. At the same time Le Duan was recalled from his place on the Nam Bo Regional Committee. These personnel changes worked out to the favour of the pro-Soviet group. Again, to quote Honey:

The major change in the DRV relationship with the Soviet Union and China took place during 1957, yet the North Vietnamese press and radio gave little indication that such an important switch was taking place. The new development projects undertaken, more frequent references to Soviet and European technicians, and the economic agreements signed offered some indications of the change but the public attitude of North Vietnam toward China and the Soviet Union remained unaltered. It would have been difficult for an outside observer to detect that North Vietnam was systematically reducing its dependence upon China and introducing greater Soviet participation in her affairs....

Such a fundamental change in DRV alignment could hardly be effected without major upheavals in the leadership, for there were undoubtedly many leaders who had concluded that the DRV's future lay with China and had therefore taken the trouble to cultivate Chinese leaders, confident of a secure base on which to construct their future careers. These men could scarcely be expected to view a switch away from Chinese influence with equanimity. Unless they resisted the move, they risked losing their important positions and being overtaken by men who enjoyed stronger Soviet backing. There is no doubt that an internal struggle of great importance did take place

¹²⁵ Ibid., p.47.

within the Lao Dong Party, but the Vietnamese Communists successfully confined it to their group, and scarcely any evidence leaked out to provide detailed information about the sides taken by individuals or the form which the quarrel took.¹²⁶

Before turning to the evidence provided by Honey to document the alleged crisis which brewed between May-December 1957, it is necessary to comment briefly on Honey's major premise. It seems doubtful that strong pro-Chinese and pro-Moscow factions ever existed within the VWP leadership. It is also doubtful that China ever exerted a decisive influence on the careers of the VWP's pro-China lobby, as Honey suggests. Two observations seem particularly relevant. Firstly, Honey provides little evidence to document his assertions that affinity towards China (or Russia) was the decisive variable in determining political orientation on the part of senior VWP officials. This classification of individuals into one of two categories appears too simple a device to account for the real complexities of the matter.¹²⁷ This is not to deny however

¹²⁶ Ibid., pp.48-50.

¹²⁷ See the excellent discussion in Zagoria, Vietnam Triangle, op.cit., pp.102-04; Turley, "Army, Party and Society in the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam", op.cit., p.106. In 1969 Dr Henry Kissinger, President-elect Richard Nixon's newly appointed assistant for national security affairs, posed the following question in a circular sent to all U.S. government organizations, agencies and departments dealing with Viet-Nam: "How sound is our knowledge of the existence and significance of stable 'Moscow' and 'Peking' factions within the Hanoi leadership, as distinct, for example, from shifting factions, all of whom recognize the need to balance off both allies. How much do we know, in general, of intraparty disputes and personalities within Hanoi?" A summary of the varied responses read as follows: "There is agreement that knowledge of the existence and significance of possible factions within the Hanoi leadership is imprecise. There are differences of opinion within the leadership on tactics as opposed to ultimate objectives but there are not stable 'Moscow' and 'Peking' factions. The Hanoi leadership will form different alignments on different issues. The attempts by the agencies to ascertain the position of various North Vietnamese leaders on specific issues shows the imprecision of our information and

(cont'd)

that there may have been personality clashes within the VWP leadership or that certain leaders may have preferred the Chinese way of doing things to the Russian way.

The second observation that should be made is that many of the facts do not fit Honey's case. For example, it is undeniable that China rendered great assistance to the Vietnamese and that the latter closely studied developments in China. There does not seem to be any convincing evidence, however, that a "brutal" form of land reform was "imposed on the North Vietnamese by the Chinese" or that Viet-Nam's so-called "Hundred Flowers" episode ("The Nhan Van-Giai Pham Affair") was a carbon copy of its Chinese counterpart.¹²⁸

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analysis. For example, different agencies set forth sharply conflicting identifications of the position of individual leaders such as [Vo Nguyen] Giap on particular questions". U.S. National Security Study Memorandum, NSSM 1 (1969) reprinted in The Congressional Record (May 10, 1972), pp.E4976-E5005 and (May 11, 1972), pp.E5008-E5066.

¹²⁸ Cf. "Testimony of D. Gareth Porter", op.cit., pp.19-20; and Porter, "The Myth of the Bloodbath: North Vietnam's Land Reform Reconsidered", IREA Interim Report No. 2, op.cit., pp.30-31 for a discussion of Chinese influence. For an opposite view consult: Teodoru, "The Bloodbath Hypothesis: The Maoist Pattern in North Vietnam's Radical Land Reform", op.cit. It should be clear from the discussion in Chapter 6 that North Viet-Nam's "Nhan Van-Giai Pham Affair" (the so-called "Hundred Flowers Campaign") is an episode requiring further research. Nonetheless the timing of events in Viet-Nam seems to have preceded developments in China. Although there are superficial similarities between the two the differences seem greater. For a discussion on events in China see: Frederick C. Teiwes, "The Politics of Rectification: From the Hundred Flowers to the Anti-Rightist Struggle", Paper presented to a seminar of the Contemporary China Centre, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University (August 28, 1975); and MacFarquhar, The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, op.cit., Vol. 1.

Further, it seems that Honey as well as many other writers has misinterpreted Truong Chinh's role in all of this. As we have observed previously, although Chinh lost his position as Party Secretary-General, he did not lose his place or rank in the Politburo, a fact borne out by Truong Chinh's numerous public appearances on behalf of that body after October 1956.¹²⁹ Those most responsible for the land reform fiasco not only lost their posts but were also expelled from the leading organs of the Party.

Given Honey's statements that "the North Vietnamese press and radio gave little indication that such an important switch [from pro-China to pro-Russia] was taking place", and that "it would have been difficult for an outside observer to detect [these changes]", and that "scarcely any evidence leaked out to provide detailed information [of what was happening]" it seems pertinent to examine closely Honey's case that a political crisis in late 1957 did occur.

Honey's argument focuses on several key events during this period: (1) Hanoi's erratic behaviour during the months May-July 1957; (2) Ho Chi Minh's overseas tour of Europe; (3) an alleged secret visit to Viet-Nam by Voroshilov in September; (4) the visit of a Russian Parliamentary delegation in October; and (5) press and radio coverage of Ho Chi Minh during the crucial period 10 November to 24 December 1957.

Honey implies that the visit of President Voroshilov to Hanoi in May 1957 was one of the first signs of the DRVN's

¹²⁹ See Chapter 5, Section V and Chapter 6, Section II.D. In fact Truong Chinh was listed before Le Duan in the Politburo hierarchy until the November 1957 Moscow Conference of Communist Parties.

realignment towards the Soviet Union. As evidence he cites the fact that Ton Duc Thang, writing in the pages of Nhan Dan, termed the visit a "most important historical event", that Voroshilov's visit was accorded a great deal of publicity inside Viet-Nam and that after the visit an announcement was made that Ho Chi Minh would commence his tour of nine European countries on July 5th.¹³⁰

Apparently - and this is implied but not made explicit by Honey - the pro-China group reacted adversely to these developments. On July 2nd the PRC Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade arrived in Hanoi causing Ho Chi Minh to delay his departure. According to Honey:

Ho Chi Minh's departure was delayed by 24 hours, ostensibly because of bad weather, although flying conditions over Tonkin appeared perfect. The whole business conveyed an impression of crisis, disorder, and impromptu decisions.¹³¹

As further evidence of a brewing political storm, Honey deems significant the fact that Ho Chi Minh visited Moscow although the Soviet Union was not included on his itinerary.¹³² Supposedly this pro-Soviet gesture was countered by the pro-Peking hardliners who signed a goods exchange and payments agreement with the PRC during Ho's absence. Other pro-Soviet moves included Ho Chi Minh's visit to Yugoslavia, which was being wooed by the USSR at that time, and "an unusually early announcement...in Hanoi that the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution would be celebrated in all parts of Vietnam

¹³⁰ Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, op.cit., p.50.

¹³¹ Ibid., p.51. I have been unable to determine the weather patterns over North Viet-Nam (Tonkin) at that time.

¹³² Ibid.

over a period of six weeks".¹³³ Again Honey is not explicit but the impression one gains about the mention of this latter item is that the pro-Russian forces were trying to pre-empt the pro-Chinese faction by publicly committing the DRVN government to a display of good will towards the Soviet Union.

Honey argues that "when Ho arrived at Hanoi on August 30 [after having stopped for two days in Peking where he was greeted effusively], the storm had broken inside the Lao Dong Party, and from that moment on developments appear confused to the outside observer".¹³⁴ To overcome this problem Honey relied on the account of an "insider" Gerard Tongas,¹³⁵ a teacher of French then working in Hanoi.

According to Tongas "[t]he crisis exploded during the visit to Hanoi, in September, 1957 [sic], of Marshall Voroshilov...and lasted until December 24. It reached such a pitch that in November the disappearance of Ho Chi Minh from the Vietnamese political scene seemed final and certain".¹³⁶ Tongas states that a mammoth welcome was prepared for the Soviet President but by the date of arrival "[s]o great was the disagreement among the Vietnamese leaders that all the customary pomp and ceremony was cancelled". After a brief welcoming ceremony at the airport Voroshilov's visit was

133 Ibid.

134 Ibid., p.52.

135 Gerard Tongas, J'ai vecu dan l'enfer communiste au Nord Vietnam et J'ai choisi la liberte [I have lived in the communist hell of North Vietnam and I have chosen freedom] op.cit. I will rely on Honey's translations for quotations from this work.

136 Tongas cited in Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, op.cit., pp.52-53.

shrouded in secrecy. The implication seems to be that the pro-Chinese faction was responsible for this turn of events.

Apparently the same faction was responsible for the lukewarm welcome (according to Tongas: "very few flags and no receptions except for one of minimal importance") accorded the Soviet Parliamentary delegation which arrived on October 18th.¹³⁷ At that time, according to Honey, Truong Chinh and Nguyen Duy Trinh (pro-Chinese) upstaged Premier Pham Van Dong at the only public meeting held for the Russian delegation. Nguyen Duy Trinh, states Honey, delivered the principal speech "and its contents was singularly ill-chosen for a speech on a Soviet anniversary before a Soviet delegation unless it was the speaker's intention to insult them, for he quoted extensively from the works of Mao Tse-tung".¹³⁸

As a result of these events, Ho Chi Minh left Viet-Nam for Moscow and then China which he visited for nearly two months. In the interim, according to Tongas:

the drama reached its highest peak. The Vietnamese leaders, always deeply divided among themselves over the question of relations with foreign states, were split even more profoundly during that period. While some extolled the indestructible friendship with the Soviets, others advanced the cause of Chinese friendship. Thus it was at the very paroxysm of the crisis the pro-Chinese carried the day and boycotted the pro-Soviet friendship demonstrations. Ho Chi Minh, seeking continuing friendship with these two powerful allies without submission to either, and the protagonist of a policy of fence-sitting between the Soviet Union and China, left for Moscow alone.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Tongas erroneously dates their arrival on October 15th, a mistake which Honey corrects. The delegation did in fact arrive on the date claimed by Honey; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1137 GMT, October 18, 1957.

¹³⁸ Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, op.cit., p.57.

¹³⁹ Tongas in ibid., p.54.

While overseas, according to Tongas, Ho Chi Minh received no mention in the Vietnamese press and radio during the period 10 November-24 December, thus adding evidence to their view that the VWP was in the midst of a crisis.¹⁴⁰ These extraordinary events were finally brought to a close after protracted negotiations between Ho and the pro-Chinese faction in Hanoi. To quote Tongas:

During all this time a hectic exchange of letters was going on. Ho Chi Minh, in full disagreement with Hanoi, laid down his minimum conditions and refused to return unless he had first received full satisfaction. It is significant that he spent a month's "holiday" at Hankow. Then he waited until the commemoration of December 19 [Resistance Day] and the anniversary of the foundation of the Vietnamese People's Army (VPA), celebrated on December 22, had passed before he commenced his journey home. He arrived back in the capital only on December 24...¹⁴¹

P.J. Honey, although demurring on certain points of fact (see below) accepted Tongas' account ("undoubtedly there is some truth in the account, and I entertain no doubts about the honesty and integrity of M. Tongas, whom I [P.J. Honey] have met").¹⁴² After reviewing the evidence, Honey finally concluded:

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. Honey confirms this observation on page 56 and notes that no mention was made of the activities of Vo Nguyen Giap.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p.55. No indication is given as to how Tongas was privy to such important correspondence.

¹⁴² D. Gareth Porter, "The Myth of the Bloodbath: North Vietnam's Land Reform Reconsidered", IREA Interim Report No. 2, p.52, questions the credibility of Tongas as an objective observer; for a defense of Tongas see: the testimony by Daniel E. Teodoru in "The Human Cost of Communism in Vietnam, II - The Myth of No Bloodbath", op.cit., p.23.

There can be no little doubt that the DRV leadership was sharply divided and that Ho Chi Minh's position was challenged, but the reasons are probably to be found in the personal wishes which existed between individual leaders, their relations with one another and with Chinese and Soviet leaders, and their personal ambitions as much as in the points of dispute between the Soviet Union and China. The fact that the crisis came about at the very moment when North Vietnam made the decision to replace predominantly Chinese aid by predominantly Soviet aid and East European aid can scarcely be attributed to coincidence. More probably the crisis was brought to a head by that important reorientation and its effects upon existing dissensions within the leadership.¹⁴³

Unfortunately the Honey-Tongas thesis errs in both fact and interpretation. Whatever disagreements existed within the VWP leadership revolved primarily around the priorities to be assigned to building up the North versus liberating the South.¹⁴⁴ There was no clear split along pro-Soviet versus pro-Chinese lines. There was no internal crisis during the final quarter of 1957, as suggested by Tongas. Rather, Ho Chi Minh was concerned with the dramatic developments which unfolded at the November Moscow Conference and their implications for Viet-Nam. In order to support these generalizations it will be necessary to criticize the Honey-Tongas thesis in detail.

Honey is correct in implying that Soviet involvement and influence in Viet-Nam increased during 1957 and that Voroshilov's visit to Hanoi in May is evidence for this. It is not clear however whether the initiatives for increased aid came solely from Hanoi. Honey errs in attaching too much significance to Thang's remark that Voroshilov's visit was a

¹⁴³ Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, op.cit., p.58.

¹⁴⁴ Latimer, "Hanoi's Leaders and Their South Vietnam Policies", op.cit., pp.42-57.

"most important historical event". Mikoyan's visit to Hanoi in April 1956, it will be recalled, was billed as "an event of great significance".¹⁴⁵ Both visits in their own right were important to the Vietnamese and as such deserved full publicity. It seems unlikely that Voroshilov's visit precipitated Lin Hai-yun's (Chinese deputy minister of foreign trade) trip to Hanoi.

The public record of Ho's departure does reveal a discrepancy: on July 3 it was announced that Ho would depart on July 5.¹⁴⁶ Ho in fact was reported to have arrived in Peking on July 6th.¹⁴⁷ Lin, the Chinese deputy minister, arrived in Hanoi on July 2nd. Did Ho Chi Minh in fact delay his departure for twenty-four hours ("ostensibly because of bad weather, although flying conditions over Tonkin appeared perfect")? There appears to be no definite answer to this question. Honey fails, however, to indicate why Ho would wish to confer with Lin when he was stopping in Peking anyway.¹⁴⁸ The Soviet Union, in fact, had a gift plane waiting at the Peking airport to transport Ho on his trip. Thus the public record does not convey "an impression of crisis, disorder, and

¹⁴⁵ Cf. "Mot Su Kien Co Y Nghia Lon" [An Event of Great Significance], Nhan Dan (March 23, 1956), No. 750, p.1, and Chapter 4, Section V.C.

¹⁴⁶ Vietnam News Agency in English Morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, July 3, 1957; and Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, op.cit., p.50.

¹⁴⁷ Associated Press dispatch from Hong Kong in The New York Times (July 7, 1957), p.15.

¹⁴⁸ Ho arrived in Pyongyang on July 8th; KCNA (Pyongyang) in English Morse to the Far East, 1012 GMT, July 8, 1957.

impromptu decisions" in Ho's departure.¹⁴⁹ (Part of his European trip had been forecast as early as April 1957 when it was announced that he had been invited to visit Poland).¹⁵⁰

The fact that Russia was not listed in Ho's original itinerary may be significant, but not in the sense Honey intended. China was not listed either.¹⁵¹ The fact that the Vietnamese media continually referred to Ho's "nine nation tour"¹⁵² might indicate that the Vietnamese leadership wished to highlight DRVN relations with socialist camp and to downplay the already established ties with China and the USSR.

No special significance need be attributed to the fact that a trade agreement (exchange of goods/payments) with China

¹⁴⁹ Associated Press dispatch from Hong Kong in The New York Times (July 9, 1957), p.5; an Ilyushin-14 was presented to Ho Chi Minh on July 8th prior to his departure for North Korea. The Russians had given similar planes to the heads of India, Burma and Egypt. One wonders if this were the Russian's counter to Eisenhower's dispatch of "Columbine II" to Hawaii to meet President Diem.

¹⁵⁰ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0655 GMT and 0719 GMT, April 6, 1957. In July it was announced that Ho Chi Minh would visit India; dispatch from New Delhi in The New York Times (July 18, 1957), p.3.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Communique of the President's office, Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, July 1, 1957; in late June the Council of Ministers announced its approval of Ho's trip; this statement mentioned only nine countries: Korea, Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Albania, Bulgaria and Rumania. See: Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 2245 GMT, June 30, 1957.

¹⁵² On the occasion of Ho's return to Hanoi it was announced that he had completed a 55-day tour of nine countries "with stops" in the Soviet Union and China; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1305 GMT, August 30, 1957.

was signed in Ho's absence.¹⁵³ Ho had not been involved in signing any other agreement negotiated in Hanoi.

Ho Chi Minh's visit to Yugoslavia, the invitation extended to Tito to visit Viet-Nam, and Vietnamese press comment on Yugoslavia (which identified Yugoslavia as "building socialism") are significant mainly as indications of improved bilateral relations. As both Russia and China were according similar treatment to the Tito regime at the time it is difficult to classify Ho's trip to Belgrade as a particularly "pro-Soviet" move.¹⁵⁴ Honey appears to have applied judgements suited to a later period of more strained Sino-Yugoslav relations.

¹⁵³ The agreement was reached on July 30th; dispatch from Hong Kong in The New York Times (August 1, 1957), p.2; and Vietnam News Agency, July 31, 1957, cited by Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, op.cit., p.51, footnote 7.

¹⁵⁴ The joint Yugoslav-Vietnamese communique could be read as DRVN endorsement for the principle of national independence (i.e. of Yugoslavia from the Soviet Union); see Reuters dispatch from Belgrade in The New York Times (August 1, 1957), p.2; and United Press dispatch from Belgrade in ibid. (August 10, 1957), p.6. Tito and Khrushchev met in Bucharest in August 1957. Although China criticized Tito's "Pula Speech" an improvement in relations was noticeable during the following six months. In January 1957 a delegation of China's National People's Congress visited Belgrade. Vice-president Vukmanovic-Tempo visited China after touring Viet-Nam in September. The point being made is that both Russia and China were improving relations with Yugoslavia at the time. Chinese criticism and hostility came later. Therefore it is not possible to classify Ho's trip to Belgrade as a "pro-Soviet" move. For background on the bloc's relations with Yugoslavia see: dispatch from Hong Kong in The New York Times (September 2, 1957), p.2; Floyd, Mao Against Khrushchev, op.cit., pp.45-46; and Viktor Meier, "Yugoslav Communism", in Griffith, editor, Communism in Europe, op.cit., Vol. I, pp.28-38.

Finally, Honey stresses the "unusually early announcement" on celebrations to mark the 40th anniversary of the Soviet October revolution. He cited a Vietnam News Agency dispatch dated August 6th, 1957.¹⁵⁵ However, as indicated above, the VWP's 12th plenum in March resolved to organize celebrations to mark this occasion.¹⁵⁶ Honey's assertion therefore appears to be irrelevant as the VWP had made public its plans to celebrate the October Revolution before the first signs of the alleged domestic crisis.

Voroshilov's alleged visit to Hanoi in September 1957, as Honey rightly observes, has not been corroborated by other evidence.¹⁵⁷ Honey also appears correct in stating "[i]t [Voroshilov's September visit] seems unlikely on the face of it that he should have returned so soon after his visit in May". Voroshilov in fact met Ho Chi Minh in Moscow in August during the latter's nine-nation tour of Europe and again in November when Ho journeyed to Moscow to attend the celebrations marking the October Revolution.¹⁵⁸

Tongas asserts, on the basis of his contacts "with some members" of the committee to welcome Voroshilov, that the Soviet President arrived after the September 2nd celebrations marking DRVN National Day.¹⁵⁹ Honey raises and dismisses the

¹⁵⁵ Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, op.cit., p.51, footnote 9.

¹⁵⁶ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, April 23, 1957.

¹⁵⁷ Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, op.cit., p.53, footnote 12.

¹⁵⁸ Reuters dispatch from London in The New York Times (August 26, 1957), p.3; and Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0541 GMT, November 3, 1957.

¹⁵⁹ Tongas cited in Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, op.cit., p.53.

possibility that Tongas might have confused Voroshilov's alleged visit with that of a Yugoslov delegation headed by Vice President Vukmanovic-Tempo because the latter arrived "a little too early".¹⁶⁰ In fact the Yugoslov delegation arrived on September 1st and departed on the fourth.¹⁶¹ Since Tongas states that the platform erected for DRVN National Day (September 2nd) was kept in place for use in welcoming Voroshilov, the possibility of just such confusion by Tongas cannot be dismissed. September was a busy month for DRVN officials. The National Assembly's 7th Session met from 10-19 September and the Vice President of India paid a State visit lasting from 12-14 September.¹⁶²

The evidence at hand does not entirely disprove the possibility that Voroshilov made an unpublicized visit to Hanoi; but this possibility seems improbable.¹⁶³ There appears to be no other evidence of political manoeuvring by the "pro-Chinese faction"¹⁶⁴ at this (or any other) time.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p.53, footnote 12.

¹⁶¹ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0632 GMT, September 1, 1957 and 0500 GMT, September 4, 1957; and dispatch from Hong Kong in The New York Times (September 5, 1957), p.2.

¹⁶² Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0606 GMT, September 10, 1957; 1238 GMT, September 14, 1957; and 1152 GMT, September 19, 1957.

¹⁶³ Honey claims that "it has been established that he [Voroshilov] was absent from Moscow during the period in question"; Communism in North Vietnam, op.cit., p.53, footnote 12.

¹⁶⁴ General Vo Nguyen Giap, the alleged leader of the pro-Soviet faction, was active at this time: (1) he attended the reception in honour of the Yugoslav vice president on September 1st; (2) he delivered the "Order of the Day" at a rally marking the DRVN's National Day, September 2nd; (3) he
(cont'd)

Honey's account of the reception accorded the Soviet Parliamentary delegation which visited Hanoi from 18-26 October contains several errors. It will be recalled that Honey argued that the pro-Chinese group (Truong Chinh and Nguyen Duy Trinh) had upstaged Pham Van Dong and that Trinh had insulted the Russian visitors by quoting "extensively from the works of Mao Tse-tung in his opening speech". In fact when the Soviet delegation paid a courtesy visit to the VWP Politburo on October 19th there was no alteration in the official hierarchy. The official list¹⁶⁵ read: Truong Chinh, Le Duan, Pham Van Dong, Hoang Van Hoan, Pham Hung and Nguyen Duy Trinh. Neither Truong Chinh nor Nguyen Duy Trinh were Vice Premiers at that time as stated by Honey. Chinh received his appointment to that post in 1958; Trinh in July 1960.¹⁶⁶

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was present at a reception hosted by the Bulgarian embassy to mark their Liberation Day, September 9th; (4) he sat on the presidium of the 7th session of the DRVN's National Assembly, September 10th-19th; (5) he gave an interview to a correspondent of the New China News Agency on September 19th; and (6) he delivered a major speech on the occasion of Nam Bo Resistance Day, September 23rd.

165 Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, October 19, 1957. Honey seems to have confused this meeting with the November 6, 1957 celebrations in Hanoi marking the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution. The presidium for these celebrations consisted of: Ton Duc Thang, Truong Chinh, Nguyen Duy Trinh, Pham Van Dong and Phan Ke Toai. Although the order may appear puzzling (i.e. Dong listed after Trinh), only Chinh and Trinh were identified by their Party posts; Dong attended in his capacity as DRVN Premier. Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0518 GMT, November 7, 1957. The celebrations marking this anniversary were more extensive than Tongas indicated.

166 Truong Chinh was appointed vice premier at the 8th session of the DRVN's National Assembly in April 1958 after the October 1957 visit to Hanoi by the Soviet Parliamentary delegation; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1215 GMT, April 29, 1958. Nguyen Duy Trinh, who was appointed director of the Bureau of Internal Affairs in the Premier's office in mid-April 1957, was not made a vice premier until July 1960, during the 1st session of the DRVN's second National Assembly; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Europe and Asia, 1344 GMT, July 15, 1960.

Even more remarkable is the confusion surrounding Nguyen Duy Trinh's speech. It was delivered not before the visiting Soviet delegation in October but on November 6th before a public gathering called to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution. There were no quotations from Mao Tse-tung in the full text published in Nhan Dan a few days later.

Similarly both Tongas and Honey are completely wrong in asserting that Ho Chi Minh received no coverage in the DRVN press during the period 10 November-24 December. A brief consultation of the back issues of Nhan Dan for this period reveals that Ho Chi Minh's activities in Moscow at that time received almost daily mention.¹⁶⁷ A similar check of the back files of the Foreign Broadcast Information Service's Daily Reports of monitored radio broadcasts from Hanoi reveals that Ho's name appears on more than one occasion, thus disproving another unfounded assertion by Tongas and Honey.¹⁶⁸

Although the lack of coverage accorded Vo Nguyen Giap during this same period is curious "it may" in the words of

¹⁶⁷ During the early period of the alleged crisis, November 10-29, Ho Chi Minh was mentioned on page one of Nhan Dan on the following dates: 10, 13, 15 (a picture of Ho appears), 17 (an interview), 18, 22, 24 and 29 (a letter). Ho's name is mentioned with equal frequency during December.

¹⁶⁸ For coverage of Ho's Moscow press conference see: Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1210 GMT, November 22, 1957 in U.S. FBIS, Daily Report (November 25, 1957), No. 228, p.EEE1; and for another story Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0558 GMT, December 1, 1957 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (December 3, 1957), No. 233, p.EEE1. See also: Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0553 GMT, November 14, 1957; 1225 GMT, November 22, 1957 and 1128 GMT, November 28, 1957.

William S. Turley "mean anything or nothing" in the absence of additional evidence.¹⁶⁹ Nhan Dan is not a large newspaper, averaging some 6-8 pages in length in its daily edition. During this period it devoted full space to reportage of events in Moscow. It is therefore unsurprising that comprehensive coverage was not given local developments, including the daily activities of Vo Nguyen Giap.¹⁷⁰

In summary, a detailed examination of the case that the VWP was rent by internal factionalism in late 1957 is found wanting. It is based on factual inaccuracies, faulty conceptualization, inappropriate methodology and over reliance on the account of one "inside" witness. Three additional considerations make it seem unlikely that a crisis of the magnitude described by Honey and Tongas occurred. Firstly,

¹⁶⁹ Turley, "Army, Party and Society in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam", op.cit., p.106, footnote 42.

¹⁷⁰ One problem in dealing comprehensively with internal DRVN affairs is accessibility to the full range of domestic publications produced at that time. Nhan Dan is but one of several papers produced. The use of radio monitoring reports has its drawbacks. Neither the FBIS nor the BBC include all radio broadcasts in their daily reports. There is evidence that a number of radio broadcasts are monitored but not included in the editions of the Daily Report or Summary of World Broadcasts used here (they apparently appear in another more comprehensive publication which is confidential). Quite often a dispatch from Hong Kong will cite a broadcast by Hanoi Radio which is not included in either the FBIS' Daily Report or the BBC's Summary of World Broadcasts. Therefore it is one thing to state that Ho's or Giap's name did not appear in either or both of the monitoring reports cited above; and quite another thing to assert that Ho's and Giap's names did not appear in any of the DRVN's press and radio output. In 1962, there were at least 150 periodicals, including magazines, printed in the DRVN. See: P.J. Honey, "The Press in North Vietnam", China News Analysis (December 14, 1961), No. 449, pp.1-7.

there were no dismissals or purges of the losers. Secondly, the increase in Soviet assistance to Viet-Nam was apparently brought about (in Honey's words) "without Chinese resentment".¹⁷¹ Why should a "pro-China faction" in Viet-Nam react so strongly when their mentors in Peking were so unconcerned? Finally, the timing of the alleged crisis is curious. It occurred before the increase in Soviet assistance (and presumably influence) was fully felt in Viet-Nam. While it might be argued that the "pro-Chinese faction" saw the writing on the wall as early as May and decided to halt the pro-Russian drift as soon as possible; it can also be argued that the "pro-Chinese group" could have adopted tactics of delay and sabotage. In brief, neither Tongas nor Honey have pointed to a particular incident which might have triggered so forceful a move on the part of a beleaguered "pro-China faction".

The final quarter of 1957 was marked by changes of a different nature, however. At that time Le Duan appeared in public and was identified as a member of the VWP Politburo. He accompanied Ho Chi Minh to Moscow where he was privy to the emerging differences between China and Russia on the question of peaceful or non-peaceful transition to socialism. Le Duan, as a senior Party official, would soon be involved in grappling with the problem of reconciling these ideological differences to the perceived needs of the Vietnamese revolution in Nam Bo.

¹⁷¹ Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, op.cit., p.48.

VII. THE MOSCOW CONFERENCE AND THE VWP'S 13th PLENUM
(NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1957)

According to an Open Letter written by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in 1963, the origins of the Sino-Soviet dispute can be traced back to Khrushchev's speech to the 20th Congress of the CPSU. In the words of the Chinese statement:

From the very onset we held that a number of views advanced at the 20th Congress concerning the contemporary international struggle and the international Communist movement were wrong, were violations of Marxism-Leninism. In particular, the complete negation of Stalin on the pretext of "combating the personality cult" and the thesis of peaceful transition to socialism by "the parliamentary road" are gross errors of principle.¹⁷²

In the period between the 20th Congress (February 1956) and the November 1957 Moscow Conference of sixty-four Communist and Workers' parties, officials of the CCP brought up the question of how to interpret Stalin's contributions to Communism in private discussions with their Soviet counterparts on no fewer than six occasions.¹⁷³ It is unknown if members of the VWP were privy to the content of these discussions. Nonetheless with the publication of "On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" on April 5, 1956, and "More on the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" on December 29, 1956, VWP officials must have been aware of the broad outlines of Sino-Soviet controversy.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² "The Origin and Development of the Differences Between the Leadership of the CPSU and Ourselves", op.cit., pp.59-60.

¹⁷³ Ibid., pp.64-65.

¹⁷⁴ See Chapter 4, Section VI, for the Vietnamese reaction.

At the heart of the dispute over assessing Stalin's contributions, was the issue of how the socialist bloc was to be organized in the post-Stalin era. Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin and his endorsement of peaceful coexistence were apparently made ex cathedra and without the prior knowledge of the Chinese. During 1956 the CCP challenged this Soviet presumption to speak for all countries; in particular they defended Gomulka of Poland against verbal attacks by the Soviet press. On the other hand, the Chinese also opposed the advocates of polycentrism such as Togliatti of Italy and Tito of Yugoslavia. The Chinese position has been summed up by Donald Zagoria in this way:

Peking sought what might be called a flexible, confederative approach to Bloc relations, as contrasted with the unitary approach insisted upon by Moscow. This confederative approach implied that there should be limits to Soviet prerogatives vis-a-vis other Bloc countries; that deviations from the Soviet model of socialist construction were not necessarily harmful; that honest differences of view should be settled by genuine and frank discussion through intra-party channels and not in public; and, above all, that such honest differences, which inevitably arise, must be subordinated to the overriding common goals of all concerned - particularly to the struggle with the West.¹⁷⁵

The convening of a conference of Communist parties in Moscow following the celebrations of the 40th anniversary of the Soviet October Revolution set the stage for a renewal of Sino-Soviet debate as the CPSU apparently intended to obtain international endorsement for the policies which Khrushchev had outlined at the 20th Congress of the CPSU. It was not surprising, therefore, that Mao Tse-tung himself led the CCP's

¹⁷⁵ Zagoria, The Sino-Soviet Conflict, op.cit., p.62.

delegation in an effort to bolster China's standing within the socialist camp and to insure that the new line for the Communist movement took cognizance of Chinese views.

The deliberations of the Moscow Conference were influenced by domestic events within the Soviet Union and China which occurred in 1957. In late June Khrushchev successfully ousted the anti-Party group and thereafter consolidated his position.¹⁷⁶ Khrushchev's rise to power brought with it a change in Soviet relations with Yugoslavia. Immediately prior to the 40th anniversary celebrations Soviet technology scored several triumphs as Russia successfully tested an intercontinental ballistic missile (August 26) and successfully orbited two earth satellites (October 4 and November 3).¹⁷⁷

Meanwhile China was in the throes of an internal debate between "leftists" and "rightists" precipitated by the Hundred Flowers Campaign and the onset of a domestic economic crisis. The leftists increasingly gained the upper hand. In mid-year

¹⁷⁶ The anti-Party group consisted of Malenkov, Kaganovich and Molotov. In July 1957 Khrushchev travelled to Czechoslovakia where he received support for purging this "anti-Lenin" trio. Meanwhile Ho arrived in Moscow and met Khrushchev on his return. During the same day Ho shared a position on the welcoming dias with the full CPSU Politburo. It seems more than likely that Ho Chi Minh was fully informed of these internal Soviet developments. See: Moscow dispatch in The New York Times (July 17, 1957), p.4; Hinton, An Introduction to Chinese Politics, op.cit., p.38; Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, op.cit., p.51. In October 1957 Khrushchev ousted Marshal Georgi Zhukov, a move which received Vietnamese endorsement: "The Leadership of the Party is the Determining Factor in All our Victories and Progress", editorial in Nhan Dan broadcast by Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0550 GMT, November 5, 1957.

¹⁷⁷ Hinton, Communist China in World Politics, op.cit., p.33.

the Hundred Flowers Campaign was called-off and preparations were made to launch an anti-rightist rectification campaign.¹⁷⁸ China's confederative policy towards bloc unity underwent a one hundred and eighty degree change between June, when Mao cancelled a scheduled trip to Poland, and late October, when China began to stress bloc unity under the leadership of the USSR.¹⁷⁹ By September the victory of the leftists was clearly evident within the CCP's Central Committee as a new twelve year programme of agricultural development was promoted once again. In fact China was experiencing the first stirrings of the Great Leap Forward. This domestic shift to more radical policies was paralleled by a swing to the left in foreign policy. The recent Soviet rocket and satellite successes were hailed by the Chinese as signalling a decisive shift in the balance of forces in favour of the socialist camp. The Chinese leadership concluded that the time had come to adopt a more militant attitude towards the West in order to exploit the new strategic situation. This policy, of course, ran counter to the USSR's policies of rapprochement with the West. On the one hand Khrushchev called for disarmament and peaceful coexistence, and on the other Mao proclaimed that "the East wind is prevailing over the West wind". David Floyd has summarized these developments in this way:

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., pp.33-35; and Hinton, An Introduction to Chinese Politics, op.cit., p.363.

¹⁷⁹ This change in Chinese policy was given emphasis by Mao Tse-tung in an address to students at Moscow University on November 17, 1957; see: Zagoria, The Sino-Soviet Conflict, op.cit., p.146. Mao's views were promptly endorsed by Nhan Dan, see: Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1219 GMT, November 20, 1957. The Chinese were instrumental in getting a condemnation of Yugoslav revisionism written into the Moscow Declaration; for a discussion see: Mehnert, Peking and Moscow, op.cit., pp.364-66.

Thus before they confronted each other in Moscow in November, a sort of polarisation of the Russian and Chinese parties had taken place: the Russians moving towards the right and the Chinese towards the left. The touchstone of their attitude to world problems had become their relations with Tito's Yugoslavia, with which Khrushchev was increasingly and persistently friendly and which Mao Tse-tung was eyeing with growing suspicion.¹⁸⁰

Prior to the November Conference the CPSU circulated a draft of the proposed declaration to various Communist parties, including Yugoslavia. No doubt Khrushchev hoped to reach some sort of settlement with Tito in advance of the meeting;¹⁸¹ he was singularly unsuccessful however as the Yugoslav leader stayed away from the gathering. It seems probable that the debate over the wording of the final declaration began almost as soon as the CPSU circulated their draft and that fraternal parties, such as the VWP, were aware of Sino-Soviet differences in advance of the conference.

The most important document to emerge from the Moscow Conference was a 5,000-word Declaration which was hammered out during November 12th-14th at a special caucus of representatives of the twelve ruling Communist and Workers' parties. It is clear from subsequent Chinese accounts that Sino-Soviet differences were brought to the attention of other delegates. The CCP in fact circulated an "Outline of Views on the Question of Peaceful Transition" on the eve of the twelve-party gathering in an effort to alter the wording of

¹⁸⁰ Floyd, Mao Against Khrushchev, op.cit., p.46.

¹⁸¹ Khrushchev and Tito met secretly in August 1957; *ibid.*, pp.45-46.

the Soviet draft.¹⁸² In the end the final declaration represented something of a compromise. To quote from the 1963 Chinese Open Letter:

At this meeting the chief subject of controversy between us and the delegation of the CPSU was the transition from capitalism to socialism. In their original draft of the Declaration the leadership of the CPSU insisted on the inclusion of the erroneous views of the 20th Congress on peaceful transition. The original draft said not a word about non-peaceful transition, mentioning only a peaceful transition; moreover, it described peaceful transition as 'securing a majority in parliament and transforming parliament from an instrument of the bourgeois dictatorship into an instrument of a genuine people's state power'. In fact, it substituted the 'parliamentary road' advocated by the opportunists of the Second International for the road of the October Revolution and tampered with the basic Marxist-Leninist theory on the state and revolution.

The Chinese Communist Party resolutely opposed the wrong views contained in the draft declaration submitted by the leadership of the CPSU. We expressed our views on the two successive drafts put forward by the Central Committee of the CPSU and made a considerable number of major changes of principle which we presented as our own revised draft. Repeated discussions were then held between the delegations of the Chinese and Soviet Parties on the basis of our revised draft before the Joint Draft Declaration by the CPSU and the CPC was submitted to the delegations of the other fraternal Parties for their opinions.

As a result of the common efforts of the delegations of the CPC and the other fraternal Parties, the meeting finally adopted the present version of the Declaration, which contains two major changes on the question of the transition from capitalism to socialism compared with the first draft put forward by the leadership of the CPSU. First, while indicating the possibility of peaceful transition, the Declaration also points to the road of non-peaceful transition and stresses that 'Leninism teaches, and experience confirms, that the ruling classes never relinquish power voluntarily'.

¹⁸² The text of this document may be found in The Polemic on the General Line of the International Communist Movement, op.cit., pp.105-08.

Secondly, while speaking of securing 'a firm majority in parliament', the Declaration emphasizes the need to 'launch an extra-parliamentary mass struggle, smash the resistance of the reactionary forces and create the necessary conditions for peaceful realization of the socialist revolution'.

Despite these changes, the formulation in the Declaration on the question of the transition from capitalism to socialism was still unsatisfactory. We finally conceded the point only out of consideration for the repeatedly expressed wish of the leaders of the CPSU that the formulation should show some connection with that of the 20th Congress of the CPSU.¹⁸³

Two Vietnamese delegations journeyed to Moscow in October-November 1957. The first consisted of a twenty-five-member DRVN government delegation led by Hoang Quoc Viet. This group represented the DRVN at the celebrations marking the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution.¹⁸⁴ The second and more important delegation was a six-member joint party and Government group led by Ho Chi Minh. It consisted of Le Duan, member of the VWP Politburo and Secretariat; Pham Hung, Minister attached to the Premier's Office and member of the VWP Politburo; Vo Dinh Tung, Minister of War Invalids; Nguyen Xien, Minister of Social Welfare and Nguyen Van Kinh, DRVN Ambassador to the USSR and member of the VWP Central Committee.¹⁸⁵ The second delegation also attended the October Revolution anniversary celebration. Ho, Le Duan and Pham Hung represented the VWP at intra-party talks, including the twelve-party gathering which approved the Declaration (see Table 9-9 for highlights of the delegations' visit).

¹⁸³ Quoted in *ibid.*, pp.71-72; additional Chinese amendments may be found on pp.72-73.

¹⁸⁴ Vietnam News Agency, October 8, 1957 in *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, Part 5 (October 15, 1957), No. 707, p.47; and Vietnam News Agency, October 17, 1957 in *ibid.* (October 22, 1957), No. 707, p.35.

¹⁸⁵ Vietnam News Agency, October 28, 1957 in *ibid.* (October 31, 1957), No. 712, p.41.

TABLE 9-9

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE VISIT TO MOSCOW BY THE JOINT DRVN-VWP DELEGATION
(NOVEMBER 1957)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
1-2 November	Six-member DRVN-VWP delegation led by Ho Chi Minh arrives in Moscow; met by President Voroshilov.
4 November	Ho Chi Minh and DRVN-VWP delegation hold talks with N.S. Khrushchev, First Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee; and N.A. Bulganin, Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers.
6 November	Ho Chi Minh addresses extraordinary session of USSR Supreme Soviet. Le Duan addresses a meeting of Moscow factory workers.
8 November	Ho Chi Minh attends international solidarity meeting of Moscow workers, elected to honorary presidium.
9 November	Ho Chi Minh and Le Duan address gathering of 700 Vietnamese students studying in the USSR.
12-14 November	Meeting of Twelve Communist and Workers' Parties in Socialist Countries.
13 November	DRVN delegation returns from trip to Leningrad.
16 November	Declaration of the Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties of Socialist Countries issued.
21 November	Ho Chi Minh and N.S. Khrushchev hold talks; Ho Chi Minh gives Moscow press conference. Hoang Quoc Viet and DRVN delegation leave for home.
28 November	Le Duan and four remaining members of DRVN-VWP delegation return to Hanoi; Ho Chi Minh remains in Moscow.
20 December	Ho Chi Minh reported in China.
24 December	Ho Chi Minh arrives back in Hanoi.

The inclusion of Le Duan on the joint DRVN-VWP delegation marked his ascendancy within the Politburo to a position second only to Ho Chi Minh. As we have noted previously, Le Duan served as Secretary of the Nam Bo Regional Committee until late

1956 when he was transferred to the north. His reassignment coincided with Truong Chinh's dismissal as Party Secretary-General. Virtually nothing is known of Le Duan's whereabouts during January-September 1957, at which time he emerged into public view as the third-ranking member of the VWP Politburo (after Ho Chi Minh and Truong Chinh). At the conclusion of the Moscow gathering Ho remained in the Soviet Union for discussions; Le Duan returned to Hanoi at the head of the DRVN-VWP delegation and addressed the Politburo on the significance of the Moscow Declaration. At this time he was listed ahead of Truong Chinh.¹⁸⁶

Unfortunately also virtually nothing is known about the role of the VWP delegation at the Moscow Conference as the deliberations of the representatives of the twelve ruling Communist parties were kept secret. We can only speculate that the VWP leaders, while they may have favoured stronger references to the non-peaceful path to socialism, were not entirely dissatisfied by the wording of the final Declaration.¹⁸⁷ Le Duan's advocacy of increased violence in Nam Bo would have been common knowledge among members of the Politburo and Central Committee and may very well have been one of the reasons why he was included on the VWP delegation.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Latimer, "Hanoi's Leaders and Their South Vietnam Policies", op.cit., pp.53-54.

¹⁸⁷ It is possible that the VWP was one of the "fraternal Parties" mentioned in the Chinese 1963 Open Letter which supported the CCP.

¹⁸⁸ Rostow, The Diffusion of Power, op.cit., pp.41 and 43; Sheehan, compiler, The Pentagon Papers, op.cit., p.75; and Honey, Genesis of a Tragedy, op.cit., pp.73-74.

The VWP, in approving the policies outlined in "Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam" had committed itself to the use of force when conditions were ripe.¹⁸⁹ In fact the wording of the 1957 Moscow Declaration clearly indicated that the use or non-use of violence would be determined by the behaviour of those holding state power. According to the Declaration:

The forms of the transition to socialism may vary for different countries. The working class and its vanguard - the Marxist-Leninist Party - seek to achieve the socialist revolution by peaceful means. This would accord with the interests of the working class and the people as a whole as well as with the national interests of the country.

Today in a number of capitalist countries the working class led by its vanguard has the opportunity, given a united working-class and popular front or other workable forms of agreement and political co-operation between the different parties and public organisations, to unite a majority of the people, to win state power without civil war and ensure the transfer of the basic means of production to the hands of the people. Relying on the majority of the people and decisively rebuffing the opportunist elements incapable of relinquishing the policy of compromise with the capitalists and landlords, the working class can defeat the reactionary, anti-popular forces, secure a firm majority in parliament, transform parliament from an instrument serving the class interests of the bourgeoisie into an instrument serving the working people, launch a non-parliamentary mass struggle, smash the resistance of the reactionary forces and create the necessary conditions for peaceful realisation of the socialist revolution. All this will be possible only by broad and ceaseless development of the class struggle of the workers, peasant masses and the urban middle strata against big monopoly capital, against reaction, for profound social reforms, for peace and socialism.

In the event of the ruling class resorting to violence against the people, the possibility of non-peaceful transition to socialism should be borne in mind. Leninism teaches, and experience confirms, that

¹⁸⁹ Working Paper, Appendices, Item 301, p.3 states: "the volume [Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam] outlined a new strategic orientation for the South Vietnam revolution...It is necessary to continue the national democratic revolution in South Vietnam and it is necessary to use force to overthrow the feudalism imperialist regime...".

the ruling classes never relinquish power voluntarily. In this case the degree of bitterness and the forms of class struggle will depend not so much on the proletariat as on the resistance put up by the reactionary circles to the will of the overwhelming majority of the people, on these circles using force at one or another stage of the struggle for socialism.

The possibility of one or another way to socialism depends on the concrete conditions in each country.¹⁹⁰

Three months prior to the Moscow Conference Le Duan in a major speech commemorating the twelfth anniversary of the August Revolution entitled "Reassessment of the Leadership of the Vietnamese Proletariat", set out his views on the class content of the national united front in Viet-Nam at the present stage.¹⁹¹ The purpose of the speech appears to have been to set out the logic and ideological underpinnings for a new national united front in Viet-Nam based on a program which appealed to the self-interests of the various social classes comprising Vietnamese society. According to Le Duan:

therefore to conceive the National United Front independently of class awareness is but an abstract knowledge [sic], a means of deceit or an instinct of conservation of the selfish interests of his own class.

The content of the national united front cannot exclude class content.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Hudson, Lowenthal and MacFarquhar, editors, The Sino-Soviet Dispute, op.cit., pp.54-55 cites the text provided by the New China News Agency, November 22, 1957. See also: TASS (Moscow) in English Hellschreiber to Europe, 0110 GMT, November 23, 1957 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (November 25, 1957), No. 228, pp.BB1-BB7.

¹⁹¹ Reprinted in Le Duan, On the Socialist Revolution in Vietnam (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1965), op.cit., Vol. I, pp.57-84. This speech is important as it appears to be the first major statement by Le Duan since regrouping to the north.

¹⁹² Ibid., p.72; Le Duan specifically excluded from membership feudalists, that is, landlords who co-operate with the imperialists.

Although Le Duan failed to mention the role of violence in achieving the objectives of the National United Front he did call for a step-up of the revolution in the south. In his words:

[t]he revolutionary task of all of us is to achieve national independence and democracy all over the country. This task lays ahead of us two concrete works: to build the North and take it vigorously to socialism and to step up the revolutionary movement in South Vietnam against U.S. imperialism and Diem's feudalism.

In order to carry through these two tasks it is necessary to accelerate the patriotic movement among the population; this movement is manifested concretely in the valiant creative labour of all the northern people in their advance to socialism, in the gradual improvement of the material and spiritual life of the people, in the measure to thwart the sabotage of U.S. imperialism and Diem's feudalism and to oppose speculative transactions. In the South this patriotism must be concretely manifested in the movement opposing the enslavement policy of the U.S.-Diem clique, claiming national independence, fighting the fascist policies, repression and oppression, by the U.S. clique, demanding democracy, improvement of the people's livelihood, thwarting the U.S.-Diem's bellicose policy and claiming peaceful reunification of the country.¹⁹³

In short, the strategy which Le Duan proposed in August 1957 was not in conflict with the wording of the November Moscow Declaration,¹⁹⁴ especially as the latter held open two possibilities in the transition to socialism. Presumably if the Diem regime resorted to violent repression of a stepped-up political struggle movement, then the VWP would be justified in resorting to armed struggle.

¹⁹³ Ibid., pp.83-84.

¹⁹⁴ It may have run counter to policies of the Soviet Union. Khrushchev wrote in Pravda at that time: "the only correct path in the development of international relations is a policy of peaceful coexistence...We work from the premise that wars are not necessary to advance socialism"; translated and reprinted in Current Digest of the Soviet Press (January 1, 1958), Vol. IX, No. 14, pp.13-18.

The VWP quickly endorsed the Moscow Declaration calling it not only a "political program for all the Communist and Workers' parties of socialist countries" but also "a political program" guiding "the building of socialism in North Vietnam as well as the struggle for Vietnam's reunification".¹⁹⁵ On November 30th after Le Duan and Pham Hung had arrived back in Hanoi they immediately addressed a meeting of the VWP Politburo on the significance of the Moscow Conference.¹⁹⁶ According to an official press account: the "Politburo expressed elation and confidence in the growth and solidarity of the socialist countries and communist movement. Particular [attention] was paid to the joint declaration and peace manifesto. The Party's Politburo's meeting decided to convene an extraordinary session of the Party's Central Committee to hear reports on these two important international conferences".¹⁹⁷

Accordingly the 13th enlarged Plenum met on December 4th and heard a report by Le Duan. According to one official

¹⁹⁵ Editorial in Nhan Dan (November 24, 1957) broadcast by Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0516 GMT, November 24, 1957.

¹⁹⁶ They returned on November 28th; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1128 GMT, November 28, 1957. In an address before DRVN officials Le Duan is quoted as saying, "The Moscow documents have not only confirmed the line and created favorable conditions for North Vietnam to advance toward socialism but have also shown the path of struggle for national liberation and have created favorable conditions for the revolutionary movement in South Vietnam"; Vietnam News Agency, December 7, 1957 quoted in Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, op.cit., p.57. This same quote appears in Latimer, "Hanoi's Leaders and Their South Vietnam Policies", op.cit., pp.55-56, who cites Vietnam News Agency, December 8, 1957. Neither broadcast can be located in the U.S. FBIS or BBC monitoring reports.

¹⁹⁷ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0558 GMT, December 1, 1957.

account: a unanimous resolution was passed "reflecting agreement of the Party Central Committee with the observations and documents which these international congresses [of 12 Communist and Workers' Parties in socialist countries and 64 Communist and Workers' Parties in the world] had approved and appeal[ing] to the entire party to study the documents and widely disseminate them among the people...".¹⁹⁸ Interestingly, however, the communique of the 13th Plenum, which was finally published on March 23, 1958, made no reference to the 1957 Moscow Conference or its Declaration and Peace Manifesto. The communique merely stated that the Plenum considered "the living standards of workers, government officials and cadres; analyzed the present wage system [salary structure]; and discussed ways of improving the wage system and increasing wages in 1958".¹⁹⁹

The lack of any reference to the Moscow Conference at this time, especially after the extensive inter-Party discussions, deserves explanation.²⁰⁰ Quite possibly the

¹⁹⁸ Voice of Vietnam dictation in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0001 GMT, December 5, 1957.

¹⁹⁹ "Thong Cao Cua Hoi Nghi Lan Thu 13 (mo rong) Cua Ban Chap Hanh Trung Uong Dang Lao Dong Viet Nam" [Communique of the Thirteenth (enlarged) Plenum of the Central Committee of the Viet Nam Workers' Party], Nhan Dan (March 23, 1958), No. 1472, pp.1 and 4.

²⁰⁰ Ho Chi Minh was still overseas at this time; it is possible that no formal resolution was passed until the Central Committee heard the results of his talks in Peking and Moscow. A conference for high and mid-level cadres to study the documents of the Moscow Conference was held from December 27, 1957 to January 14, 1958. It heard reports by Le Duan and Truong Chinh and was addressed by Ho Chi Minh on the last day. Hanoi Radio D/S [domestic service?], 0030 GMT, January 17, 1958.

Central Committee was unable to reach a consensus on a statement indicating the role and timing of revolutionary violence in the present stage of the Vietnamese revolution. During the last quarter of 1957, for example, party officials used the anniversaries of the 1940 Nam Bo Uprising and National Resistance Day to argue the appropriateness of lessons from the past. Tran Van Giau, a party cadre active in the August Revolution in Nam Bo and now a senior official, argued for restraint:

Thus if an uprising is raised when the revolutionary force is not powerful enough or when the powerful revolutionary force is not well organized, correctly led, and closely united, this uprising cannot succeed. It cannot escape certain failure, and an abortive uprising will exert a bad influence, especially on the revolutionary force itself.²⁰¹

Nhan Dan, the party newspaper, criticized those who had become disillusioned with present policies. According to an editorial marking National Resistance Day:

[d]uring the first years of our resistance, many people have shown themselves confused and have had no confidence in our final victory...Today after three years of hard struggle, some people are beginning to be discouraged and to doubt our advance under the party leadership because they are unable to hold fast to the basic principles and the development of our revolution during the present new phase.²⁰²

Le Duan, citing the August Revolution as evidence, argued that:

[w]ithout a superior international position the revolution for national liberation of the Vietnamese people cannot have a revolutionary theory capable of grasping the line of growth and extinction of

²⁰¹ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 1200 GMT, November 23, 1957.

²⁰² "Let Us Develop The Heroic Traditions of Our People and Firmly Maintain Our Confidence in Our Struggle" editorial in Nhan Dan (December 19, 1957) broadcast by Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0440 GMT, December 19, 1957.

imperialism, and cannot have powerful allied forces in the world and cannot triumph. It is precisely the unity of the world proletariat and the contradictions of imperialism which have created for the national liberation movement in Vietnam the conditions to overthrow imperialism and local feudalism.²⁰³

It is this latter point which appears to provide the best explanation for Ho Chi Minh's prolonged absence from Viet-Nam. Ho recognized that the struggle for the unification of Viet-Nam could not be accomplished without relating it to broader developments affecting the socialist camp as a whole.²⁰⁴ Any attempt to step up the revolutionary movement in Nam Bo would need Soviet and Chinese support. It was obviously in Viet-Nam's interest to follow a policy which encouraged a unity of views between Moscow and Peking on the issue of Vietnamese reunification.²⁰⁵ Although information is lacking on the

²⁰³ Le Duan, "Reassessment of the Leadership of the Vietnamese Proletariat" in On the Socialist Revolution in Vietnam, op.cit., Vol. 1, p.82.

²⁰⁴ Ho Chi Minh, "The October Revolution and the Liberation of the Peoples of the East (November 6, 1957)" in Fall, editor, Ho Chi Minh On Revolution, op.cit., p.331 wrote: "the national question can no longer be viewed from an abstract and isolated point of view. Marxism-Leninism has shown that national movements effectively directed against imperialism unfailingly contribute to the general revolutionary struggle and that national claims and national movements must not be estimated according to their strictly local political and social character in a narrow-minded way, but according to the part they play against the imperialist forces in the world".

²⁰⁵ North Viet-Nam's role in the Sino-Soviet dispute is a subject deserving further detailed study. Although various attempts have been made to chart the VWP's policy shifts in favour of one power and then towards the other, a general view would suggest that Viet-Nam followed its own independent course. Ho Chi Minh, a founding member of the French Communist Party and an early associate of the Comintern, was especially concerned to maintain the unity of the socialist camp as an adjunct of the struggle for the reunification of Viet-Nam. Ho wrote in his final testament, "[b]eing a man who has devoted his whole life to the revolution, the more proud I am of the growth of the international communist and workers' movement, the more pained I am by the current discord among the fraternal Parties. I hope that our Party will do its best to contribute

(cont'd)

substance of Ho's talks in Moscow and Peking following the conference of Communist and Workers' parties, it seems likely that Ho discussed economic assistance (particularly with Soviet officials),²⁰⁶ bloc unity (the relations between parties as well as with Yugoslavia) and the form which the Vietnamese revolution should take (whether peaceful or non-peaceful).

Paul Gorman, in analyzing the various interpretations of events in Hanoi in the last quarter of 1957, concluded:

Proponents of both interpretations [that is, that the VWP was either split into pro-Chinese and pro-Russian factions (Honey) or that the VWP was split between factions who disagreed on how much priority should be given to northern developments as opposed to revolution in the south (Zagoria)] conclude that Hanoi's predilection for the USSR was ipso facto a deferral of support for the insurgency in the South. But the evidence supports a third interpretation. It is quite possible that DRV leaders sought and won Soviet support because they found it impossible amicably to set priorities between internal and external national objectives. It seems evident that only the Soviets could offer the wherewithal to pursue both sets of goals simultaneously, and it is possible that the Lao Dong leaders opted for 'guns and butter' rather than 'socialism in one country'. The apparent harmony among the pro-China and pro-Russia 'factions' by early 1958 bespeaks such a compromise solution. Of course, serious doubt remains whether the Soviets would have valued DRV fealty high enough to pay the price, yet it seems that such could have been the case. The new DRV-USSR understanding reached during 1957 definitely included the extension of material aid which North Vietnam needed for its economic advancement. It

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effectively to the restoration of unity among the fraternal Parties on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism, in a way which conforms to both reason and sentiment". See: President Ho Chi Minh's Testament (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1969), p.10.

206 The DRVN and the USSR signed a cultural co-operation agreement for 1958 on December 25, 1957 after a week of talks. Nguyen Khanh Toan, the DRVN's Vice Minister of Education signed for Viet-Nam. Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1130 GMT, December 27, 1957.

evidently also included Soviet concurrence in a more adventuresome policy toward reunification. Whether or not specific DRV advances upon South Vietnam were countenanced, it is evident that the DRV leaders had obtained Soviet recognition that North Vietnam's circumstances placed it outside the range of strategic and doctrinal considerations which had led Khrushchev, et al., into 'peaceful competition' and 'peaceful coexistence'.²⁰⁷

VIII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A. CONSOLIDATING THE NORTH

On New Year's Day 1958, Ho Chi Minh announced that "the period of economic restoration has come to an end and the period of planned economic development has begun. This marks a new advance in the revolutionary work of our people...To develop our economy and culture means to build socialism gradually".²⁰⁸ In short the DRVN had recovered from the damage inflicted during the Resistance War; the national democratic revolution in the North was declared completed and the era of building socialism begun.

The DRVN's economic development plans for 1958 were mapped out at the 8th Session of the National Assembly which met from April 16th-29th.²⁰⁹ In his report to the National Assembly, Pham Van Dong set out two major tasks to be accomplished:

²⁰⁷ "Hanoi and the Insurgency in South Vietnam", in United States-Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab 3, p.52. General Gorman was identified as the author of this section after the publication of the Pentagon Papers; see: Kahin, "The Pentagon Papers: A Critical Evaluation", op.cit., p.677.

²⁰⁸ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0507 GMT, January 1, 1958.

²⁰⁹ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1215 GMT, April 29, 1958. This session of the National Assembly announced a number of personnel changes; for an
(cont'd)

1. We must develop the state economy along socialist lines, turn Vietnam from a backward agricultural country into a prosperous agricultural and industrial country, and then into a rich, strong, advanced, and industrialized socialist country.

2. Simultaneously, and beginning now, we must pay particular attention to transforming the national economy, transforming the non-socialist economic sectors into socialist ones, and transforming agriculture, handicrafts, and private capitalist industry and commerce along socialist lines.²¹⁰

It was clear from this and other reports²¹¹ that the DRVN was preparing to initiate a three-year period of planned economic development in which every effort would be made to transform various sectors of the economy into state-owned enterprises. Dong reported, for example, that only capital construction, posts and telegraphs, railways and banks were one hundred percent state-operated. Although the socialized sector of the economy was "the leading force" Dong pointed out

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analysis see: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Office of Intelligence Research and Analysis, Intelligence Report: North Vietnam Braces Itself for Socialism (Washington, D.C.: October 13, 1958), No. 7837.

²¹⁰ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1150 GMT, April 17, 1958 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (April 21, 1958), No. 77, pp.EEE1-EEE2.

²¹¹ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1320 GMT, April 29, 1958 reports that the National Assembly passed four resolutions (endorsing the leading role of the VWP in the DRVN government, endorsing the tasks of the three-year plan and the State plan for 1958, approving the government report on the balance of payments for 1957 and the national budget for 1958 and temporarily postponing elections for the National Assembly thus continuing a resolution of the 6th Session of the National Assembly) and two draft laws (on the organization of local administration and on the conditions of service for PAVN officers).

that there still remained a large capitalist sector, especially in the areas of handicrafts, small business (retail trade) and agriculture.²¹² The DRVN's first Three-Year Plan, outlined at the National Assembly's 8th Session, indicated that each of these areas would be gradually transformed along socialist lines. In agriculture, for example, nascent mutual aid teams would provide the base from which agricultural co-operatives would be built.²¹³

In rounding out his report Dong identified two areas of crucial importance. He stated that:

[s]ocialist transformation of private capitalist commerce must be considered as one of the most important and urgent problems because in the private capitalist sector there are a number of bad elements who, by engaging in speculation and hoarding, have disrupted the markets, evaded taxes, etc.²¹⁴

The other area of importance concerned agriculture where "particular importance must be paid to the production of food, especially paddy". Here, stated Dong, "the most important problem at present" lies in solving the problem of irrigation, obtaining sufficient fertilizer and improving agricultural techniques.

The DRVN's economic development plans also called for the growth of industry which, as Pham Van Dong indicated, relied

²¹² Privately owned small businesses and handicrafts accounted for 59% of industrial output. Sixty-eight percent of retail trade and 39% of wholesale trade was in private hands.

²¹³ Hong Kong dispatch in The New York Times (April 20, 1958), p.5 cites remarks by Nguyen Van Tran, the DRVN deputy chairman of the State Planning Board.

²¹⁴ Vietnam News Agency in English Morse to Southeast Asia, 1150 GMT, April 17, 1958 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (April 21, 1958), No. 77, p.EEE2.

"on the cooperation and assistance of the socialist countries". In this area the DRVN planned to concentrate on developing the means of production, producing consumer goods and exploiting natural resources.

The DRVN's economic development plans were obviously made possible by increased foreign assistance (primarily Soviet and Chinese) which rose from 1958 onward.²¹⁵ In May 1958 the DRVN's progress in building socialism was acknowledged when a representative of the VWP was invited to attend a meeting of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in Moscow.²¹⁶ The Council was composed of members of the Warsaw Pact. Representatives of the CCP, Korean Labor Party, and the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party were also invited to send observers.

Although the Council meeting was primarily concerned with ironing out problems of economic integration in Europe,²¹⁷ its final communique indicated that economic co-operation was being planned for the entire socialist bloc:

²¹⁵ In November 1958 the DRVN signed an agreement on cultural co-operation with Albania and the following month negotiated a trade agreement with the USSR which witnessed a 70% increase in trade over 1956; see: Vietnam News Agency, November 25, 1958 and December 30, 1958 respectively. For a general discussion consult, "Soviet Trade With South-East Asian Countries", The YUVA Newsletter (April 1962), Vol. I, No. 2, p.36 and (January 1963), Vol. 2, No. 1, p.1 and Honey, Communism in North Vietnam, op.cit., pp.65-66.

²¹⁶ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, June 23, 1958 reports that the VWP delegation was led by Politburo member Nguyen Duy Trinh, a specialist on foreign aid and economic affairs.

²¹⁷ Harry Schwartz dispatch from New York in The New York Times (May 25, 1958), p.36; William J. Jordan dispatch from Moscow in ibid. (May 27, 1958), p.5 and Sydney Gruson dispatch from Warsaw in ibid. (May 25, 1958), pp.1 and 34.

[t]he representatives of parties of the countries which do not belong to the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance expressed readiness to take an active part in the economic cooperation of the Socialist countries, to strengthen this cooperation in due forms by measures conforming to the specific conditions in their countries.²¹⁸

Throughout the remainder of the year the DRVN proceeded on the basis of economic plans approved by the 8th Session of the National Assembly. In September the Council of Ministers summed up the prospects for continued economic development in this way:

There are advantages and difficulties in the present situation. First, our advantages. The rectification campaign has brought results in rural areas. Thanks to the patriotic emulation movement, the carrying out of the State plan has made notable progress in recent months, especially in the fourth quarter. In this 10th month crop, we have exerted new efforts to increase production and develop the manpower exchange and co-operative movement; the gradual reform of anti-socialist economic elements along socialist lines is being carried out, or preparations are being made to carry it out in a steadfast and positive manner. We have begun to readjust our organisations and pay special attention to the problem of allotting managerial jobs. We have paid special attention to the political and ideological education of cadres and the people and achieved initial results. In State factories, we are embarking on a campaign aimed at teaching socialist thinking to workers, improving factory management, and extensively applying labour union laws.

In the present situation in the North, however, we face many difficulties and obstacles in every branch of activity at both central and local levels, and many shortcomings and mistakes have not been corrected. To surmount these difficulties and obstacles, we must clearly and fully understand them. There are, however, fundamental advantages...These advantages are the source of our determination.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ Reuters dispatch from London in *ibid.* (May 25, 1958), p.35 reproduces the communique of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance as translated by TASS.

²¹⁹ Vietnam News Agency, October 24, 1958.

In short the DRVN was making progress in its efforts to develop the north, a fact recognized by the Soviet Union. On the occasion of the 1958 celebrations of the October Revolution the DRVN was listed in slogans marking that occasion as among the nations "building socialism" for the first time.²²⁰

At the end of the year the VWP convened the 14th Plenum of its Central Committee (November) and the 9th Session of the National Assembly (December 9-12) to review developments in 1958 and to decide on the general line, direction and tasks for the socialist revolution. The Central Committee, after hearing a report by Nguyen Duy Trinh on the 1958-60 plan for economic transformation and cultural development decided that:

'[t]he immediate central task is to step up the socialist transformation of the sector of individual economy of the peasants and handicraftsmen and that of the sector of privately-run capitalist economy, and at the same time to strive to develop the sector of state-run economy which is the leading force of the whole national economy.' (emphasis in the original)²²¹

The 9th Session of the National Assembly approved the final draft of the Three-Year Plan for Economic and Cultural Development for the years 1958-60.²²² According to Nguyen Duy Trinh the Three-Year Plan included the following three objectives:

²²⁰ Cameron, "The Soviet Union and Vietnam", op.cit., p.199.

²²¹ An Outline History of the Viet Nam Workers' Party, op.cit., p.88; material enclosed in single quotation marks is usually an excerpt from the original resolution. See also: Hanoi Radio in Vietnamese D/S, 0015 GMT, December 8, 1958 in BBC, Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 5 (December 11, 1958), No. 827, pp.53-54.

²²² Hanoi Radio in Vietnamese, 1100 GMT, December 5, 1958.

1. To accelerate the development of agricultural and industrial production by considering agricultural production as the main point, to solve the food problem, while paying keen attention to industrial production, increasing means of production and satisfying the major part of the demand in consumer goods.

2. To endeavour to transform agriculture, handicrafts, private capitalist industry and trade along socialist lines, the main link in the chain being the acceleration of agricultural co-operation; simultaneously to develop and strengthen the State economic sector.

3. On the basis of developing production, to improve a step further the material and cultural life of the people, especially the toiling people and to consolidate the national defence.²²³

The decision to step-up the process of agricultural collectivization coupled with a record grain harvest of 4.6 million metric tons (see Table 6-1) is clear evidence that the DRVN had overcome the disruptions caused by land reform. Pham Van Dong, in fact, declared at the 8th Session of the National Assembly that "[g]enerally speaking, the mistakes committed during land reform have been corrected and the rectification of errors has brought good results. A number of remaining cases are still being redressed".²²⁴

In addition to positive progress in the economic consolidation of the north, VWP leaders also achieved success in 1957-58 in the following areas:

²²³ Nguyen Duy Trinh, "Economic and Cultural Development", in The Problems Facing the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam in 1961 (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n.d.), pp.9-10.

²²⁴ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1150 GMT, April 17, 1958 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (April 21, 1958), No. 77, p.EEE3.

1. The Viet-Nam Workers' Party, weakened by the land reform fiasco in 1956, was remoulded into an effective organization.²²⁵

2. The People's Army of Viet-Nam, swollen in size by the absorption of regional and guerrilla forces as well as military units regrouped from the south,²²⁶ was reorganized into a modern fighting force, with various specialized branches.²²⁷ During 1957-59 it underwent a process of technological modernization. At the same time Party political controls were instituted at all levels.²²⁸

As a result of decisions taken by the VWP's 12th Plenum, military units were assigned tasks in the civilian economy.

²²⁵ An Outline History of the Viet Nam Workers' Party, op.cit., p.90. This was particularly important as membership in the VWP probably never exceeded 2% of the population. See: David W.P. Elliott, "Political Integration in North Vietnam: The Cooperativization Period", in Zasloff and Brown, editors, Communism in Indochina, op.cit., pp.165-93 for a discussion of the importance of this low ratio of Party members to the civilian population. Fall estimates that the VWP membership in 1960 may have totalled 500,000 in a population of 30 million; Fall, "A 'Straight Zigzag': The Road to Socialism in North Viet-Nam", op.cit., p.216.

²²⁶ Associated Press dispatch from Washington in The New York Times (July 1, 1955), p.10 quotes the U.S. State Department as estimating that PAVN had doubled in size from 4 to 6 new infantry divisions; Associated Press dispatch from Washington in ibid. (June 2, 1956), p.4, reports that PAVN had increased from seven to 20 divisions. The estimate was provided by Walter S. Robertson, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State.

²²⁷ Much of the equipment was provided by China and was transported into Viet-Nam without being controlled or supervised by the ICC; see: Nutt, Troika on Trial, op.cit., Vol. I, pp.238-50. The reorganization of PAVN witnessed the demobilization of 80,000 veterans; see: Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, May 8, 1958.

²²⁸ Hanoi Radio dictation in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0030 GMT, July 2, 1958.

The Army's involvement in this sector was increased in 1958 as certain units assumed responsibility for running State farms.²²⁹

3. Following the "Nhan Van-Giai Pham Affair" DRVN authorities instituted a variety of programs to control dissident intellectuals. In 1957 a new Writers' Union was formed and a new journal Van (Literature) published. In 1958, after a series of re-education courses and criticism sessions,²³⁰ (for musicians, fine arts, writers, journalists, etc.) reorganized their executive committees. During June and July, for example, numerous dissidents were expelled or suspended from membership. At the same time the government promulgated a variety of guidelines to control the activities of the intelligentsia.²³¹

4. In January 1957 the 6th Session of the National Assembly appointed a Committee to Amend the Constitution under the chairmanship of Ho Chi Minh. The purpose of this

²²⁹ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 1330 GMT, March 26, 1958 provides commentary on Vo Nguyen Giap's, "The 1958 Responsibilities of Our Army"; for an assessment of the PAVN's performance in the first half of 1958 see: Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, June 27, 1958. See also: Gittinger, "Communist Land Policy in North Vietnam", op.cit., p.124.

²³⁰ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, April 15, 1958 carries a self-criticism by Nguyen Manh Tuong in which he repudiates his speech on land reform in 1956. It will be recalled that a doctored version of Tuong's speech was given wide circulation by RVN psychological warfare agencies.

²³¹ Nhu Phong, "Intellectuals, Writers and Artists", op.cit., pp.84-89; New China News Agency, April 13, 1958; Reuters dispatch from Saigon, 1143 GMT, April 22, 1958 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (April 22, 1958), No. 78, p.EEE1; Voice of Vietnam dictation to Southeast Asia, 0030 GMT, July 10, 1958 in ibid. (July 11, 1958), No. 134, pp.EEE6-EEE7.

committee was to prepare a new document to replace the 1946 Constitution. In June 1958 it was announced that a referendum would be held to approve the draft constitution.²³² The significance of this development is that by providing a legal base for its program of socialist construction, the DRVN overcame many of the criticisms voiced in 1956 concerning the legal rights of individuals in the DRVN.

B. WINNING THE SYMPATHY AND SUPPORT OF THE WORLD'S PEOPLES

In 1957-58 the DRVN made great strides in expanding the level of its international contacts. Most progress was made within the socialist camp, where the DRVN negotiated a series of economic and cultural agreements. The DRVN and socialist countries also exchanged high-level delegations which served to draw the DRVN closer to its European allies, which raised the DRVN's international prestige, which matched the RVN's efforts in the field of diplomacy and, most importantly, which netted the DRVN much needed development assistance. The DRVN also improved its relations with neighbouring Laos,²³³ Cambodia,²³⁴ Burma and India as well as with nations comprising the Afro-Asian Bloc.

²³² Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0130 GMT, April 19, 1958; dictation in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0030 GMT, July 1, 1958.

²³³ An RLG delegation visited the DRVN in 1957 to discuss border problems and the withdrawal of military forces from the frontier, see: Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1203 GMT, October 4, 1957 and Reuters dispatch from Hong Kong in The New York Times (September 23, 1957), p.8.

²³⁴ A DRVN delegation attended celebrations in Phnom Penh marking the anniversary of Buddha's birth; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0540 GMT, May 23, 1957. Later in the year Cambodia and the DRVN held talks on the status of Vietnamese residents of Cambodia; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, November 2, 1957.

These international contacts became especially important in 1958 when the DRVN made another attempt to settle the issue of Vietnamese reunification by peaceful means. As we have noted above the VWP was unable to reach a consensus on the issue of non-peaceful transition to socialism at its 13th Plenum. On the one hand there was disagreement over domestic factors. Some argued that a resort to force at that time would be premature. Others argued that priority should continue to be placed on developing the north. On the other hand, it would appear, there was also disagreement over external factors. Undoubtedly Sino-Soviet differences weighed heavily on these deliberations. Given these circumstances it seems likely that in 1958 the VWP bowed to Soviet pressures to intensify the pursuit of Vietnamese reunification by peaceful means.²³⁵

As we noted in Chapter 5, when it became clear that the RVN would refuse to meet any of the deadlines on political issues set by the Geneva Agreements, the DRVN immediately launched a broad campaign proposing contacts on several levels.

²³⁵ During most of this period the DRVN dutifully endorsed USSR foreign policy. The Moscow Conference declaration and peace manifesto was endorsed by a host of domestic groups in North Viet-Nam including the Fatherland Front; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0520 GMT, March 23, 1958. The November 6th appeal and December 25th resolution of the USSR's Supreme Soviet on easing world tension and co-operation for peace received wide endorsement in the DRVN; Hanoi Radio D/S, 0030 GMT, January 25, 1958. Soviet proposals for a summit conference were backed by the Standing Committee of the DRVN National Assembly; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, January 30, 1958. The Soviet decision to halt nuclear testing was similarly acclaimed; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0552 GMT, April 16, 1958. The DRVN also joined in Bloc attacks on Yugoslav revisionism after Tito circulated a draft program on the Yugoslav Communist League; Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0621 GMT, May 8, 1958.

The DRVN also kept the issue alive by addressing letters to the ICC and the Geneva Conference co-chairmen. This same pattern continued during 1957 and 1958.

On June 8, 1957 Pham Van Dong forwarded a letter to the Geneva co-chairmen asking them to take all necessary measures to insure that "the Geneva Agreements are respected and correctly implemented".²³⁶ This was followed later in the year by repeated calls to expand postal, banking and trading relations.²³⁷ On July 18, 1957 the DRVN once again proposed to the "competent authorities" in South Viet-Nam that they hold a consultative conference to discuss reunification elections.²³⁸ In this note the DRVN once again reiterated its earlier proposals for the establishment of normal relations "in all fields". The RVN responded with a communique dated July 26, 1957 scotching the proposals. Otherwise these efforts to keep the issue of Vietnamese reunification alive failed to evoke any response from the non-Communist Geneva powers.²³⁹

²³⁶ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, June 12, 1957 and Associated Press dispatch from Saigon in The New York Times (June 13, 1956), p.10. Apparently the DRVN received no reply.

²³⁷ For statements by the various departments concerned see: Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, June 25, 1957; in English morse to South Vietnam, 0140 GMT, August 11, 1957; Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 2330 GMT, September 24, 1957 and Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0607 GMT, January 30, 1958.

²³⁸ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0525 GMT, July 24, 1957 and Tillman Durdin dispatch from Hong Kong in The New York Times (July 21, 1958), p.9.

²³⁹ Sar Desai, Indian Foreign Policy, op.cit., p.111.

While the DRVN initiatives of 1957 appear to be a continuation of its earlier attempts to put the onus on the RVN and to stimulate the political struggle movement in Nam Bo, a definite shift in intention was noticeable in 1958. On March 7th Pham Van Dong proposed not only the re-establishment of trading relations but also a bilateral reduction in armed forces.²⁴⁰ This initiative immediately received endorsement from the Soviet Union and China.²⁴¹ Dong's offer was rejected by the RVN as "propaganda" aimed at undermining a SEATO meeting then taking place in Manila.²⁴² In a further statement issued on April 26th the RVN called upon the DRVN to renounce the "revolutionary acceleration of the liberation of the South" characterized by an increase in terror, sabotage and murder in remote southern villages.²⁴³

240 Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, March 9, 1958. Dong mentioned that PAVN had been reduced by 80,000 in the previous year and called for an end to U.S. interference in Viet-Nam.

241 New China News Agency (Peking) radioteletype in English to West and North Europe, 2100 GMT, March 8, 1958 and 1730 GMT, March 9, 1958; and Radio Moscow in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 1300 GMT, March 10, 1958. The statement also received wide endorsement by a variety of groups in the DRVN, for a statement by the Fatherland Front see: Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1619 GMT, March 10, 1958.

242 Associated Press dispatch from Saigon in The New York Times (March 17, 1958), p.5; for details of the SEATO meeting see: dispatch by Robert C. Doty from Paris in ibid. (March 2, 1958), p.3, and Hinton, Communist China in World Politics, op.cit., p.37, who points out that the meeting was concerned with "'indirect aggression', meaning Communist subversion, clearly a major instrumentality of the CPR and those Asian Communist Parties closest to it".

243 "Declaration of the Government of The Republic April 26, 1958", The Times of Viet Nam (April 26, 1958), Vol. 2, No. 85, pp.1-2.

Pham Van Dong's letter of March 7th, and a follow-up statement issued by the Premier's Office on May 8th,²⁴⁴ were certainly more than mere propaganda. They went much further than the earlier initiatives designed to demonstrate the RVN's obstinancy and the DRVN's commitment to peaceful reunification. Coming as they did after the Moscow Conference, the 13th Plenum and Ho's lengthy discussions in Moscow and Peking, they appear designed as part of a campaign to prove that the peaceful reunification of Viet-Nam was in fact impossible because of the attitudes of the RVN and the United States. Throughout 1958 various ministries and organizations in the North flooded their counterparts in the South with requests for co-operation not only in the area of trade, banking and communications,²⁴⁵ but also in the areas of literature, art, education, science, culture and health.²⁴⁶ In September and in December Pham Van Dong once again sent a note to the RVN proposing consultations, a reduction in military forces, freedom of movement and trading

²⁴⁴ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, May 8, 1958 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (May 9, 1958), No. 91, pp.EEE4-EEE16.

²⁴⁵ Cf. Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, April 25, 1958 (for a statement by the Ministry of Commerce); 0541 GMT, April 26, 1958 (National Bank); 0532 GMT, June 10, 1958 (Ministry of Communications, Posts and Telecommunications).

²⁴⁶ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1230 GMT, July 8, 1958 (Ministry of Culture); Vietnam News Agency, July 23, 1958 (Ministry of Education); and Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1318 GMT, July 31, 1958 (Ministry of Public Health). These statements were followed up by other letters.

relations.²⁴⁷ By that time, however, the Phu Loi incident²⁴⁸ had occurred and VWP now appeared ready to unleash to bellicose propaganda barrage against the Diem regime and its American backers.

In parallel with these initiatives towards the Republic of Viet-Nam, the DRVN also began to beat the drums of anti-Americanism. On March 19, 1958, the first of a series of anti-U.S. demonstrations was held. Forty thousand people were reported to have gathered in Hai Phong - Nam Dinh, while another thirty-five thousand attended a rally in Hanoi²⁴⁹ sponsored jointly by the Fatherland Front, the Viet-Nam Committee for Afro-Asian Solidarity and the Viet-Nam Peace

²⁴⁷ Vietnam News Agency, December 26, 1958; Quang Loi, South of the 17th Parallel, op.cit., pp.103-05; and Hong Kong dispatch in The New York Times (December 27, 1958), p.2. Dong's statement made four main points: (1) neither zone should adhere to any form of military alliance and both sides should reduce their armed forces; (2) both zones should engage in the exchange of local items and other forms of trade; (3) both sides should halt "war propaganda"; and (4) free movement should be permitted between North and South. Dong's letter was widely circulated in the south by the Party's underground for use with the political struggle movement; see: "Cong Ham Cua Thu Tuong Chanh Phu Nuoc Viet Nam Dan Chu Cong Hoa Goi Tong Thong Cong Hoa Viet Nam" [Official Letter from the Premier of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam to the President of the Republic of Viet-Nam] (December 22, 1958) in Race, compiler, Vietnamese Materials, Reel I, document 1013.

²⁴⁸ An alleged food poisoning incident which occurred on December 1, 1958 and which received wide and exaggerated coverage by the DRVN's media. In retrospect this incident appears to have been made the casus belli between the DRVN and RVN. Cf. New Facts: Phu Loi Mass Murder in South Viet Nam (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959). This incident will be discussed in the following chapter.

²⁴⁹ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1130 GMT, March 19, 1958; 0521 GMT, March 20, 1958. March 19th was the anniversary of a 1950 public protest at the arrival in Saigon of American warships in support of the French.

Committee.²⁵⁰ By April over 170,000 persons were estimated to have attended similar rallies throughout the country. In June the DRVN inaugurated a "film season against U.S. imperialism" using material produced in Russia, China and other socialist countries.²⁵¹

The fourth anniversary of the Geneva Agreements (July 20, 1958) served as another occasion for displays of anti-American sentiment. According to media reports 30,000 rallied in Hai Phong while another 50,000 demonstrated in Hanoi.²⁵² Thereafter the pace of developments picked up for by September, according to Xuan Thuy, over 2.25 million persons had been involved in these gatherings.²⁵³

Hand in hand with the anti-U.S. rallies came revelations that foreign spy rings and saboteur groups were operating in the north.²⁵⁴ On March 20, 1958 fourteen alleged espionage agents were tried before 10,000 people in Hanoi. The group's

²⁵⁰ The Peace Committee was enlarged at this time to include at least two individuals with extensive experience in the south: Pham Huy Thong, a former member of the Saigon-Cholon Peace Movement who had been expelled to the north; and Tran Van Giau, a participant in Saigon during the August Revolution. See: Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0526 GMT, August 27, 1958.

²⁵¹ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, June 9, 1958.

²⁵² Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1158 GMT, July 23, 1958; and Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 0430 and 1100 GMT, July 21, 1958.

²⁵³ Voice of Vietnam in Vietnamese to Southeast Asia, 1100 GMT, September 10, 1958.

²⁵⁴ The DRVN had made several complaints earlier concerning violations of North Viet-Nam's air space; see: Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1205 GMT, December 24, 1957; and 1305 GMT, February 7, 1958.

leader was sentenced to death and publicly executed.²⁵⁵ At the same time the DRVN expelled a diplomat attached to the French General-Delegation in Hanoi who was implicated in the affair.²⁵⁶ Two months later both the French and British were forced to close their consulates in Hai Phong.²⁵⁷ Further groups were uncovered as the year wore on.²⁵⁸

C. THE 14th PLENUM (NOVEMBER 1958)

During 1958, despite the Soviet Union's policy of peaceful coexistence, the international situation grew more tense. In part this was due to the domestic politics of various countries which affected the international system.²⁵⁹ In July, for example, as a result of a left-wing revolution in Iraq, that country withdrew from the Baghdad Pact.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁵ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0605 GMT, March 21, 1958 and Hanoi Radio, 0030 GMT, May 28, 1958.

²⁵⁶ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 1135 GMT, March 21, 1958.

²⁵⁷ Associated Press dispatch from Saigon in The New York Times (May 30, 1958), p.3.

²⁵⁸ New China News Agency (Peking) in English morse to Northeast and Southeast Asia, 0939 GMT, April 20, 1958; "Hanoi Students Jailed", The Times of Viet Nam (August 1, 1958), Vol. 2, No. 166, p.1; New China News Agency, August 22, 1957 reports on a Kuo Min Tang agent who was parachuted into the DRVN; Vietnam News Agency, November 23, 1958.

²⁵⁹ In addition to the cases cited below it should be recalled that the Algerian revolution was in progress. China and the DRVN were among the first to grant the provisional Algerian government diplomatic recognition. See: Ho Chi Minh, "Telegram Greeting the Provisional Government of the Republic of Algeria", Selected Works, op.cit., Vol. 4, pp.322-23; and Hinton, Communist China in World Politics, op.cit., p.35.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., p.37.

These events precipitated American military intervention in Lebanon. Sino-Soviet differences immediately came to the fore as China adopted a more militant attitude towards these events.

At that time the PRC was in the process of accelerating the Great Leap Forward, a radical domestic program, officially approved at the CCP's 8th Congress (second session) in May.²⁶¹ As we have noted Soviet rocket successes in late 1957 had encouraged the PRC to adopt more militant policies. Throughout the months of May-July 1958 a Chinese military conference met and publicly announced plans to "liberate Taiwan".²⁶² On August 23rd mainland gunners opened up on the Nationalist-held off-shore islands of Quemoy and Matsu precipitating the Formosan Straits Crisis.

Meanwhile developments in Indochina seemed to offer possibilities for the VWP. In Laos the left-wing Neo Lao Haksat made dramatic electoral gains in May.²⁶³ This immediately provoked a right-wing counter-reaction. In July, despite protests by the Communist powers, ICC operations in Laos were terminated. At the same time Premier Souvanna Phouma resigned setting the stage for the dismissal of left-wing representatives from the Royal Lao Government. This occurred on August 18th.²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ Hinton, An Introduction to Chinese Politics, op.cit., p.40.

²⁶² Hinton, Communist China in World Politics, op.cit., p.266.

²⁶³ Tillman Durdin dispatch from Vientiane in The New York Times (May 13, 1958), p.7. The Neo Lao Haksat and their supporters in the Santiphab (Neutrality) party won 13 of 21 seats; this gave the left-wing faction a voting strength in the National Assembly of roughly 21-25 out of a total of 59.

²⁶⁴ Associated Press dispatch from Vientiane in ibid. (July 23, 1958), p.2 and (August 19, 1958), p.8. See also: Hinton, Communist China in World Politics, pp.341-42.

During May-July relations between Cambodia and the Republic of Viet-Nam deteriorated as a result of incursions by Vietnamese Army units in pursuit of sect and Communist-led guerrillas.²⁶⁵ Prince Sihanouk immediately sought to protect Cambodia's sovereignty by granting diplomatic recognition to China. In August the Prince journeyed to Peking where he met Mao Tse-tung.²⁶⁶

These international developments set the environment for the deliberations of the VWP's 14th Plenum which met in early November 1958. According to the final communique the Central Committee discussed three reports: one by Le Duan on the international situation, another by Nguyen Duy Trinh on the 1958-60 plan for economic transformation and cultural development and the third by Truong Chinh summarizing the results of the land reform.²⁶⁷

With respect to the international situation the Plenum declared:

since the conference of twelve Communist and Workers' parties in socialist countries and the conference of sixty-four Communist and Workers' parties in the world held in Moscow last year, the forces of the socialist countries have shown

²⁶⁵ Associated Press dispatch in The Times of Viet Nam (April 2, 1958), Vol. 2, No. 71, pp.1 and 4; "Full Translation of the Government Communique", in ibid. (June 27, 1958), Vol. 2, No. 136, p.1; Reuters dispatch from Saigon in The New York Times (June 5, 1958), p.5; Associated Press dispatch in ibid. (June 26, 1958), p.10; Reuters dispatch from Phnom Penh in ibid. (July 1, 1958), p.3 and Tillman Durdin dispatch in ibid. (July 2, 1958), p.2. Cf. Sihanouk and Burchett, My War with the C.I.A., op.cit., p.102.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p.103; Associated Press dispatch from Tokyo in The New York Times (August 16, 1958), p.6; and Reuters dispatch from Hong Kong in ibid. (July 2, 1958), p.2.

²⁶⁷ "Hoi Nghi Trung Uong Dang Lan Thu 14 Thao Luan Va Quyet Dinh Nhiem Vu Cai Tao Xa Hoi Chu Nghia Va Nhung Muc Tieu Phan

(cont'd)

themselves to be increasingly superior to those of the imperialist countries and that the East wind has continued to prevail over the West wind (gio Dong tiep tuc thoi bat gio Tay).

The communique also stated that "the movement for national liberation in Asia, Africa and South America (Nam My) continues to develop steadily".

On the domestic scene the Plenum noted with approval the progress achieved under the 1958 State Plan and approved the first Three-Year Plan for Economic Transformation and Cultural Development. The main task to be accomplished in the coming years was agricultural co-operativization. It was hoped to raise agricultural production from the present high level of 4.6 million tons "to a minimum of 7.6 million tons of paddy per year". In the industrial sector the communique forecast the construction of industrial zones at Viet Tri and Thai Nguyen as well as factories to process raw materials and others to produce farm machinery.²⁶⁸

Once again the decision to accord priority to northern developments provoked controversy. According to an official VWP history:

[t]he Party also struggled to overcome inappropriate understanding of the close inter-relations of the task of the socialist revolution in the North and that of liberating the South, characterized by the fear that the advance of the North toward socialism would hinder the struggle for Viet Nam's reunification. The Party pointed out that i[t] was just in order to create favourable conditions for

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Dau Cua Ke Hoach Ba Nam Phat Trien Kinh Te Va Van Hoa" [The 14th Plenum of the Party's Central Committee Discussed and Resolved the Tasks of Socialist Construction and the Objectives of the Three-Year Plan of Economic and Cultural Development], Nhan Dan (December 8, 1958), No. 1730, pp.1-2.

268 Coincidentally Dang Viet Chau, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade, led a DRVN trade delegation to the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary and Rumania to sign trade agreements for 1959-60; Vietnam News Agency, November 28, 1958.

the struggle to liberate the South and achieve the reunification of the country that the North must advance rapidly, vigorously and steadily toward socialism.

Under the specific conditions of our country... while the country was still divided into two zones, what methods and forms should we use and what tempo should we adopt to advance toward socialism? Such were the very complex problems facing our Party [at the 14th Plenum in November 1958].²⁶⁹

It seems likely that the Central Committee, after approving the Three-Year Plan of socialist construction, also agreed to conduct a comprehensive review of Party policy toward the revolution in Nam Bo. In order to fully appreciate developments there Le Duan left Hanoi on a secret trip to the South to gather material for a report to the Central Committee at its next meeting.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁹ An Outline History of the Viet Nam Workers' Party, op.cit., pp.87-88.

²⁷⁰ Carver, "The Faceless Viet Cong", op.cit., p.359 writes "in late 1958 Le Duan himself was sent on an extensive inspection trip in the South, and that upon his return to Hanoi in early 1959 he presented a list of recommendations subsequently adopted by the Lao Dong Central Committee and referred to in Viet Cong cadre training sessions as 'Resolution 15'". Le Duan in fact was absent during the visit (28 November-2 December 1958) to North Viet-Nam of the North Korean government delegation led by Kim Il-sung as his name was missing from all public coverage of the tour. On the face of it this is not necessarily significant as Le Duan held no formal government as opposed to party position; however on November 29th when the Korean delegation called upon the leaders of the VWP Le Duan's name was once again absent from the list (which specifically referred to VWP Politburo members). See: Vietnam News Agency, November 29, 1958. According to a 1965 publication Le Duan addressed a meeting of administrative cadres in Thanh Hoa province sometime in December 1958; Le Duan, "Some Opinions on the Movement for Agricultural Co-operativization", in On the Socialist Revolution in Vietnam, op.cit., Vol. 2, pp.56-90.

Although the 15th Plenum (which convened in January 1959) has been identified by VWP sources as the meeting which approved the stepping-up of the revolutionary movement in the South, there are indications that the VWP may have decided in principle to intensify the revolutionary movement at the 14th Plenum. According to Pentagon analyst Paul Gorman:

U.S. intelligence came into possession of a directive from Hanoi to its subordinate headquarters in Inter-Sector [Zone] V during December, 1958, which stated that the Lao Dong Party Central Committee had decided to 'open a new stage of the struggle...'.²⁷¹

²⁷¹ "Hanoi and the Insurgency in South Vietnam", in United States-Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 2, IV.A.5. Tab 3, p.55, footnote 185. Gorman cites two sources: (1) U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Memorandum: The Organization, Activities, and Objectives of the Communist Front in South Viet-Nam (September 22, 1965) and (2) U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Current Intelligence Weekly Review (19 April 1958) [sic]. The Memorandum, a copy of which is in the author's possession, states: "[i]n late 1958, Hanoi apparently began to plan to revitalize its Front apparatus in South Vietnam". George Kahin, who disparages Gorman's research and conclusions, has correctly pointed out that the second source was published seven months before the alleged decision was taken. Kahin fails to consider the possibility that the date might be a typographical error for 1959. Cf. Kahin, "The Pentagon Papers: A Critical Evaluation", op.cit., p.678.

In an effort to clear up this point I wrote to General Gorman. His reply states: "I reaffirm that the most reliable sources of U.S. intelligence at that time were indicating exactly what I described. Moreover, I can assure you that what was written was subjected to close scrutiny by Les Gelb and others, who examined my evidence, and allowed my interpretation to stand. Whatever your version of the footnotes may show, my judgment then and now is that the DRV covert action stepped up in 1958, and December 1958-January 1959 intercepts established an intention to support military action". Paul F. Gorman letter to the author, November 13, 1976.

PART 3

FOUNDING THE NATIONAL FRONT

CHAPTER 10

FOUNDING THE NFLSVN

I. THE 15th PLENUM (JANUARY 1959)

On December 1, 1958 during the course of a riot by detainees at the Phu Loi reeducation centre in Thu Dau Mot province, inexperienced warders, members of the Civil Guard, panicked and machine-gunned to death a score or more of the demonstrators.¹ Among the dead and wounded were former members of the Resistance, peace activists and individuals associated with the sects.² This incident was immediately seized upon by DRVN propagandists who alleged that an unsuccessful attempt had been made to poison the entire prison population of 6,000 inmates. According to DRVN claims, 1,000 persons were killed.³

Over the course of the following months the Phu Loi incident was given wide publicity in both halves of Viet-Nam by the VWP. It, and other alleged incidents of anti-Communist repression, were used as evidence of the "fascist, warlike and dictatorial nature" of the Diem regime. It is undeniable that the Party's underground had suffered terribly at the hands of

¹ Honey, "The Problem of Democracy in Vietnam", op.cit., pp. 74-77; Lacouture, Vietnam: Between Two Truces, op.cit., p.29; and Republic of Viet-Nam, Violations of the Geneva Agreements by the Viet-Minh Communists, op.cit., pp.106-08.

² Quang Loi, South of the 17th Parallel, op.cit., p.69.

³ Vietnam News Agency in English Morse to Southeast Asia, 1200 GMT, January 18, 1959; see also: New Facts: Phu Loi Mass Murder in South Viet Nam, op.cit. and The Phu Loi Massacre in South Viet Nam (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959).

the RVN.⁴ As we have noted in Chapter 8, after a period of recovery during early 1958 the Party's fortunes began to plummet later in the year. In the face of renewed repression the question of armed force was debated once again. One Party cadre has stated for example:

by 1959 the situation in the South had crossed to a stage which the Communists considered to be the darkest in their whole lives...Because of this situation Party members were angry at the Central Committee, and demanded armed action. Party members did not dare break discipline, but nevertheless there were instances of undisciplined behavior, kidnappings and assassinations, in order to resolve the problem of survival. At the same time the southern branch of the Party demanded of the Central Committee a reasonable policy in dealing with the southern regime, in order to preserve the existence of the southern organization. If not, it would be completely destroyed.⁵

According to an official Party history:

in January, 1959, in an important conference, South Viet-Nam's revolutionary leaders pointed out that South Vietnamese society was a neo-colonial and semi-feudal one. The Ngo Dinh Diem administration was a reactionary, cruel, war-like one which had betrayed the national interests. It was obviously a US tool for aggression and enslavement. The direction and task of (the) South Vietnamese revolution could not diverge from the general revolutionary law of using revolutionary violence to oppose counter-revolutionary violence, rising up to seize power for the people. It was time to resort to armed struggle, combined with political struggle to push the movement forward.

⁴ For example, in February 1959 the chief of An Xuyen province announced the following results of a five-week ACDC: 8,125 "Viet Cong" agents surrendered and the denunciation of 9,806 others in addition to 29,978 sympathizers. United States Operations Mission, Saigon Daily News Round-Up (February 28, 1959) in Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, op. cit., p.169; Burchett, Vietnam Will Win!, op.cit., p.151; Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.8; Zasloff, Origins of the Insurgency, op.cit., pp.15, 18 and 21; and Vo Nguyen Giap, memorandum (March 6, 1959) to the ICC as carried by Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0526 GMT, March 19, 1959 in U.S. FBIS Daily Report (March 20, 1959), No. 55, pp.EEE2-EEE13.

⁵ Race, "The Origins of the Second Indochina War", op.cit., p.376.

In the light of this conference, the people of South Viet Nam passed from various forms of political struggle and armed struggle to insurrection, beginning with the simultaneous uprising of the people of Ben Tre province (on January 17, 1960).⁶ (emphasis in original)

The January conference was almost certainly the 15th Plenum of the VWP's Central Committee which met at that time to hear Le Duan's report on his trip to the South.⁷ George Carver has written:

he [Le Duan] presented a list of recommendations subsequently adopted by the Lao Dong [Party] Central Committee and referred to in Viet Cong cadre training sessions as 'Resolution 15'. These recommendations laid out the whole future course of the southern insurgency, including the establishment of a National Liberation Front to be controlled by the Central Committee of the South Vietnamese branch of the Lao Dong Party and supported by a South Vietnamese 'liberation army'. The Front was to be charged with conducting a political struggle, backed by armed force, designed to neutralize the South and pave the way for 'reunification'...⁸

Communist documents captured after Carver's article was written confirm this account.⁹ The new Front was to consist

⁶ An Outline History of the Viet Nam Workers' Party, op.cit., pp.108-09.

⁷ There has been considerable confusion over the dating of the 15th Plenum no doubt arising from the fact that the communique of the plenum was published in May. It has now been established that the 15th Plenum met in January, the 16th Plenum in April and the Politburo in May 1959. See: "Main Events in the History of the Viet Nam Workers' Party", Vietnam News Agency, 4th transmission, January 24, 1970; Vietnam News Agency, May 19, 1959 in BBC, Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 3, Weekly Supplement, 2nd series, No. 6 (May 27, 1959), FE/W6/B/34-35 which carries the text of the communique of the 16th Plenum; and Working Paper, Appendices, Item 301, p.10.

⁸ Carver, "The Faceless Viet Cong", op.cit., pp.359-60.

⁹ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.33 and Experiences of the South Vietnam Revolutionary Movement During the Past Several Years, Working Paper, Appendices, Item 301, pp.3-5 and 10.

of a four-class alliance (of which the "workers and farmers [peasants] is the basic factor") led by the Party. The VWP made plans to reactivate a directorate of the Central Committee (cuc trung uong), an organizational device dating back to the Resistance, to oversee its operations in the South.¹⁰ Resolution 15 not only approved the continued growth of the revolutionary armed forces, it also approved the use of violence to accompany the political struggle movement. In brief, the 15th Plenum sanctioned a limited escalation of the conflict. Force was to be used to protect the Party and its bases, to disrupt and destroy RVN administration at the most basic level and to create an environment in which it might be possible to launch a general uprising.¹¹ The VWP had no intention of employing PAVN units in an armed confrontation with ARVN; neither was the VWP sanctioning a policy of all-out attack on the Republic of Viet-Nam.¹²

Whatever the disagreements¹³ it is certain that the VWP Central Committee approved a significant change in policy at this time. According to the communique of the 15th Plenum:

¹⁰ Republic of Viet-Nam, Ministry of National Defence, Study of the Activation and Activities of R, op.cit., pp.21, 48 and 68. For an analysis of the role of the Central Committee Directorate for Southern Viet-Nam (Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam) see: Thayer, "Southern Vietnamese Revolutionary Organizations and The Viet Nam Workers' Party", op.cit., pp.31-48.

¹¹ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.28; and Republic of Viet-Nam, Ministry of National Defence, Study of the Activation and Activities of R, op.cit., p.68.

¹² Race, "The Origins of the Second Indochina War", op.cit., pp.375-77; Turley, "Army, Party and Society in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam", op.cit., pp.158-60; and Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, pp.33-38.

¹³ Race, "The Origins of the Second Indochina War", op.cit., p.375 writes that "the new policy must have been born of a sharp conflict within the Central Committee itself in which the proponents of change overcame the backers of the status quo".

our whole people, united and struggling heroically with perseverance, will certainly smash the U.S. scheme to seize our land and the plot to sell out our country by their [the Americans] lackeys. On the basis of the consolidation of the North, and its steady development in all fields, and on the basis of the broad and powerful development of the patriotic movement in the South, and with the approval and support of the peace-loving people the world over, our struggle for national reunification will certainly be successful.¹⁴

In other words, after two years of implementing the policies outlined in "Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam" a majority of Central Committee members concluded that sufficient progress had been made in consolidating the north and winning the sympathy and support of the world's peoples to merit giving more attention to developments in the South. The key factor in this decision was the state of the Party's underground organization and its ability to survive RVN repression. Thus the decision to authorize the use of force appears to have been taken none too soon for the VWP's underground declined in strength from 15,000 members in 1957 to a mere 5,000 by mid-1959.¹⁵

The implementation of resolution 15 appears to have been delayed for four months, during which time Ho Chi Minh

¹⁴ "Hoi Nghi Trung Uong Dang Lan Thu 15 (mo rong)" [The 15th Plenum (enlarged) of the Party's Central Committee] Nhan Dan (May 14, 1959), No. 1885, p.1. It was the publication of this communique (which stated that the Central Committee had met "recently") which led most observers to conclude that the 15th Plenum had convened in May.

¹⁵ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.26. "At any rate a short period of time was lost because although many areas were engaged in armed propaganda up to this time it was limited to armed propaganda and insufficient strength existed to maintain continual opposition to the enemy. Although slow in coming, it was not too slow because there was still time to transform the situation into one where the proper conditions existed". Quoted from Working Paper, Appendices, Item 301, p.11.

journeyed overseas to consult with Soviet and Chinese leaders.¹⁶ In May, after Ho's return, the VWP Politburo met to draw up guidelines for the implementation of resolution 15. It is clear that the passage of Law 10/59 in the South,¹⁷ a law under which members of the Communist Party were executed by beheading,¹⁸ influenced the final outcome. If reluctance to permit the use of armed violence had been evident during the months since January, it now was overcome by the majority view in the Politburo. A later account noted with regard to Nam Bo:

[t]he directive of the Politburo in May 1959 stated that the time had come to push the armed struggle against the enemy. Thanks to this, we followed the actual situation in order to formulate a program which we felt to be essential, and in October 1959, the armed struggle was launched.¹⁹

A similar policy was implemented in the highlands of Trung Bo where, as we have seen, preparations had long been underway to launch an armed uprising. According to Ta Xuan Linh:

¹⁶ Vietnam News Agency in English morse to Southeast Asia, 0500 GMT, January 20, 1959 reports that Ho attended the CPSU's 21st Congress; New China News Agency, February 8 and 9, 1959 reports on Ho's activities in Peking; and Hinton, Communist China in World Politics, op.cit., pp.36 and 342.

¹⁷ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, pp.34 and 36. For a copy of the text of the law see: Pham Van Bach, et al. Fascist Terror in South Viet-Nam: Law 10/59 (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), pp.71-77.

¹⁸ Warner, The Last Confucian, op.cit., pp.109-10 has written: "[d]uring the first year that the law operated, the tribunals investigated 431 incidents and tried 25 cases involving 131 accused, 27 were sentenced to death, 50 to life imprisonment, or 20 years, 47 to 10 years, and 7 others were acquitted".

¹⁹ Working Paper, Appendices, Item 301, p.10. The 4th Congress of the Nam Bo Regional Committee was held in October 1959; Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., p.117. See also: Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.38.

[i]n the summer of this year [June-August 1959] a historic resolution reached them [Party cadres in the highlands], giving them the green light for switching from political struggle alone to political struggle combined with armed self-defense and support activities. A new page had been turned in the history of the South Vietnamese revolution.²⁰

During May, no doubt as a result of Politburo initiative, preparations were undertaken to increase the infiltration of southern regroupees back to the south via the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos. Doan 559 (Group 559) was established at this time to oversee some twenty way-stations on the trail.²¹ Later in the year Doan 603, a maritime unit, was set up to oversee movement by sea.²² By the end of 1960 these groups successfully introduced some 4,500 cadres into the South where they replenished a badly decimated Party underground.²³

After the historic resolution of the 15th Plenum and the Politburo's May directive had been read and digested at all

²⁰ Ta Xuan Linh, "Armed Uprising by Ethnic Minorities Along the Truong Son", Part 2, op.cit., p.20.

²¹ According to Van Tien Dung, "The 559th Troops, as their name indicates, came into being in May 1959 and are subordinate to the Rear Service General Department" in Nhan Dan (April 6, 1976) as translated by U.S. FBIS Daily Report (June 7, 1976), Vol. IV, No. 110, Supplement No. 38, pp.12 and 15. "Interrogation of a Senior Sergeant, a member of the Viet Cong 5th Military Region", Working Paper, Appendices, Item 73, p.1; and "Interrogation of a member of the 603rd Battalion, who was captured in Quang Ngai Province in 1960, and the interrogation of the commander of a company who was also captured in Quang Ngai Province in 1960"; ibid., Item 72.

²² "Interrogation reports of Viet Cong agents dispatched by the maritime infiltration unit of Hanoi's Intelligence Directorate. The unnamed individuals were captured aboard a junk in July 1960"; ibid., Item 75 and "An intelligence summary on the interrogation of numerous Viet Cong agents captured along the coast of South Vietnam during June and July 1961", ibid., Item 76.

²³ United States Department of State, Working Paper on the North Vietnamese Role in the War in South Vietnam reproduced in Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes (June 1968), Nos. 36-37, Table I, p.19.

levels, the Party's underground took to the offensive. In the final quarter of 1959 the number of RVN officials killed and kidnapped rose dramatically, reaching the 1,400 mark by the end of 1960.²⁴ This tactic effectively cut off the RVN from certain rural areas where the Party developed larger-sized military units (see Map 10-1).

In March and April 1959 the first provincial armed units to be formed in the highlands since 1954 were created in Quang Ngai and Ninh Thuan provinces.²⁵ After receiving the "resolution on the orientation of the movement" the Party implemented long-standing plans for an uprising in Tra Bong district of Quang Ngai. This occurred in August.²⁶ The following month Party forces in Nam Bo successfully ambushed two companies of ARVN's 23rd Infantry Division.²⁷ The weapons captured in this attack were used in a successful assault on the headquarters of ARVN's 32nd Regiment based at Trang Sup, Tay Ninh province during Tet 1960.²⁸ At the same

²⁴ United States Department of State, A Threat to Peace, op.cit., Part I, p.13.

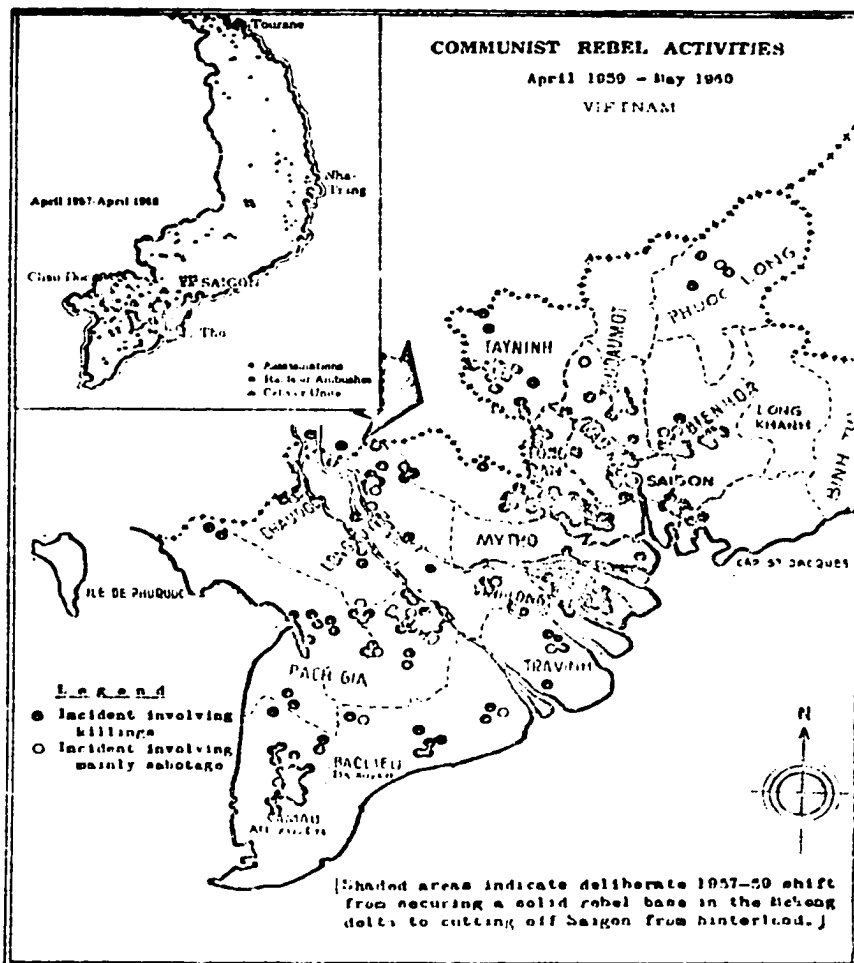
²⁵ Ta Xuan Linh, "Armed Uprisings by Ethnic Minorities Along the Truong Son", Part 2, op.cit., p.19. One group was named "339" after the date of its founding, March 3, 1959.

²⁶ Ibid., p.20; and Ta Xuan Linh, Nguyen Ho and Nguyen Khanh Tuong, "Cuoc Dong Khoi Tra Bong (28-8-1959)" [The Tra Bong Uprising of August 28, 1959], Nghien Cuu Lich Su (May-June 1971), No. 138, pp.12-27.

²⁷ Warner, The Last Confucian, op.cit., pp.159-60 and Warner, "Vietnam: How Did It All Begin?", The Sydney Morning Herald (January 16, 1974), p.2.

²⁸ Charles W. Thayer, Guerrilla (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1963), pp.25-29; Warner, The Last Confucian, op.cit., p.160; Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.38; Burchett, Inside Story of the Guerrilla War, op.cit., pp.109-19; Burchett, Vietnam Will Win!, pp.3-4; Burchett, The Furtive War, op.cit., p.106; Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., pp.106-07; and Ta Xuan Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet-Nam", op.cit., p.24. Philippe Devillers, "The Struggle for the Unification of Vietnam", op.cit., p.14 erroneously dates the attack in 1959.

MAP 10-1
COMMUNIST REBEL ACTIVITIES
APRIL 1959-MAY 1960



SOURCE:

Bernard B. Fall, editor, Viet-Nam Witness, p.282.

time the Party conducted an uprising in Ben Tre province²⁹ inaugurating the period of "simultaneous" or "concerted" uprisings.

The expansion of the Party's influence in the rural areas followed in the wake of armed violence. Party cadres concentrated on restoring underground cells and in creating the embryo of village revolutionary administrations and mass organizations.³⁰ Ex-Resistance veterans were grouped together into an Association of Former Resistance Veterans which convened a much publicized meeting in March 1960 to call for the overthrow of the Diem government.³¹

Thus in the period from the 15th Plenum to September 1960, when the VWP held its Third National Congress, the Party's underground in the south witnessed a reversal of fortune. The new policy of armed violence permitted the VWP organization to strike out at the RVN on the local level, severely crippling its administrative capacity. The Party's success in achieving these objectives led to the formal ratification of plans to create a new front. Le Duan, in his political report to the Congress stated, for example:

²⁹ An Bao Minh, "Uprising in Ben Tre", Vietnamese Studies (September 1968), Nos. 18/19, pp.130-50; and An Bao Minh, "Simultaneous Uprisings", South Viet Nam in Struggle (May 20, 1974), No. 249, p.3.

³⁰ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, pp.35-38; Burchett, Vietnam Will Win!, op.cit., p.121 writes, "[i]n Ca Mau a regional resistance organization was founded several months before the NFL was officially established". Cf. "Special Report on Current Internal Security Situation" telegram from the U.S. Embassy in Saigon to the U.S. Department of State, Dispatch 278 (March 7, 1960) in United States-Vietnam Relations, op.cit., Book 10, pp.1254-75.

³¹ Tuyen Bo cua Nhung Nguoi Khang Chien Cu Ve Tinh Hinh Mien Nam Viet Nam [Declaration of Former Members of the Resistance Concerning the Situation in South Viet-Nam] in Race, compiler, Vietnamese Materials, Microfilm Reel I, Document No. 1041. Burchett, Inside Story of the Guerrilla War, op.cit., p.186; and Race, War Comes to Long An, op.cit., pp.120-21.

To ensure the complete success for the revolutionary struggle in south Viet Nam, our people there, under the leadership of the Marxist-Leninist Party of the working class, must strive to establish a united bloc of workers, peasants, and soldiers, and to bring into being a broad National United Front directed against the U.S. and Diem and based upon the worker-peasant alliance. This front must rally all the patriotic classes and sections of the people, the majority and the minority nationalities, all patriotic parties and religious groupings, together with all individuals inclined to oppose the U.S.-Diem [regime]. The aims of the struggle of the National United Front against the U.S. and Diem in the South are peace, national independence, democratic freedoms, improvement of the living conditions of the people and the peaceful reunification of the Fatherland.³²

By the time Le Duan made this statement preparations to create such a Front at the village level had been underway for nearly a year.³³ Apparently an unexpected (and unsuccessful) coup d'etat by ARVN military officers launched against the Diem government in November 1960 caused Party cadres to speed up their schedule.³⁴ A month later, according to Bernard B. Fall:

³² Le Duan, "Political Report of the Central Committee of the Viet Nam Workers' Party (September 5, 1960)", in Third National Congress of the Viet Nam Workers' Party, Documents, Volume I, pp.62-63.

³³ Bernard B. Fall, "The Roots of the Conflict", International Affairs [London] (January 1965), Vol. XL, No. 1 reprinted in Fall, ed., Viet-Nam Witness, op.cit., p.283. For details of this organization-building period see the accounts by various Party cadres who were active in the 1959-60 period: Z-ZH Interviews Nos. 41, 65, 117, 124, 127, 128, and 130 in Rand Vietnam Interview Series Z - Viet Cong Organization and Motivation and Experiences of Its Members, AD 74132 (Alexandria, Virginia: Defense Documentation Station for Scientific and Technical Information, March 1972), 2 Microfilm Reels.

³⁴ "Saigon, Bastion of the Anti-US Struggle", Vietnam Courier (June 1975), New series No. 37, p.25. For a description of the coup and lengthy excerpts from the manifesto issued by the unsuccessful plotters consult: Burchett, The Furtive War, op.cit., pp.29-80, passim.

at 8 pm - exactly fourteen years to the hour from the beginning of the Viet-Minh's anti-French resistance - a small group of representatives of various South Vietnamese opposition groups met in the inaccessible forests north of Saigon. According to the well-informed Douglas Pike, there may have been "about fifty others attending as individuals". The meeting lasted beyond midnight, and the resulting organization, the NFL, thus was proclaimed to exist as of December 20, 1960.³⁵

During the following year the VWP underground emerged under the guise of the People's Revolutionary Party (Dang Nhan Dan Cach Mang).³⁶ The various military forces were united under a single command, headed by a PAVN officer, and renamed the Liberation Armed Forces.³⁷ Various functional liberation associations (for peasants, women, youth, students, etc.) were established and the embryo of the NFL administrative structure, from province to village level, was created.³⁸ In February-March 1962 the NFL held its First National Congress at which the provisional organizing committee of 1960 turned over its duties to a newly chosen Central Committee.³⁹ The

³⁵ Fall, The Two Viet-Nams, Revised Edition, op.cit., p.362. See also: Z-ZH Interview No. 128, p.7 in Rand Vietnam Interview Series Z, op.cit.

³⁶ Burchett, Vietnam Will Win!, op.cit., p.151.

³⁷ Ta Xuan Linh, "How Armed Struggle Began in South Viet Nam", op.cit., p.19; and 10 Years of the P.L.A.F. (South Vietnam: Giai Phong Editions, 1971), p.50. The commander of these forces was Tran Nam Trung since identified as Tran Luong, a member of the VWP Central Committee and a PAVN general. See also: Burchett, Inside Story of the Guerrilla War, op.cit., p.146 who quotes Sao Nam as stating, "at the end of 1960, we operated under the name of Armed Propaganda Groups of the People's Self-Defense Forces".

³⁸ Ta Xuan Linh, "Armed Uprisings by Ethnic Minorities Along the Truong Son", Part 2, op.cit., p.21; Vietnam Youth [Hanoi] (March 1966), p.11; Liberation Radio in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, 0500 GMT, January 9, 1974 and New China News Agency, 0822 GMT, February 3, 1961.

³⁹ Burchett, The Furtive War, op.cit., pp.95-106.

leadership of the NFL consisted of long-time VWP cadres who had been active in the south, members of the sect forces, former non-Party members of the Resistance and non-Communist opponents of the Diem regime.⁴⁰ Rank-and-file membership consisted of rural folk long under the influence of the Party's underground or areas under the influence of dissident sect forces.⁴¹ The Liberation Armed Forces likewise included soldiers from the sect armed forces as well as newly recruited units under the leadership of Party cadres. The National Front for the Liberation of South Viet Nam quickly grew in size. According to Douglas Pike the NFL had a membership of about 37,500 when it was founded in December 1960; by the time of its first congress this figure had risen to 300,000.⁴² It was the growth and influence of this organization which so worried President Kennedy when he took office in early 1961.

II. CONCLUSION

A. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Previous accounts of the origins of the NFL, as we have pointed out in the introduction, were greatly influenced by the nature of the debate over the efficacy of Western involvement in Viet-Nam. Official U.S. and RVN interpretations correctly stressed the role of the Lao Dong Party but failed

⁴⁰ Commission for Foreign Relations of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, Personalities of the South Vietnam Liberation Movement, op.cit.

⁴¹ United States Mission in Vietnam, A Note on the Vietnamese Sects (Saigon: Joint United States Planning Office, May 1969), pp.2-3.

⁴² Pike, Viet Cong, op.cit., p.115.

to indicate that the Party itself was a national organization which had operated throughout Viet-Nam prior to partition.⁴³ The official interpretations put forward in various White Papers overlooked the pre-existing areas of Party influence in the south. These same accounts also tended to overlook the widespread opposition to the Diem regime by the politico-religious sects (and others) as well as the increasing alienation of various groups (farmers, ethnic minorities, urban intellectuals, etc.) caused by Diem's domestic policies.

On the other hand, critics of the U.S. and RVN interpretations have correctly stressed the brutal treatment accorded ex-members of the Resistance as one of the major factors leading to a renewal of insurgency in the south. These writers, however, have overstressed the independence of cadres in the south in their relations with the Party Central Committee. Although it is true that the demand to resort to armed force arose in the south, it is also true that other cadres, particularly on the Nam Bo Regional Committee (1957-59), felt that unification could be achieved by peaceful means.⁴⁴ In the course of internal disputes in the south the Nam Bo Committee exercised strict discipline over lower-level cadres who violated the Party's guidelines. The Regional Committee only changed its policies after the Central Committee

⁴³ Or alternatively, when the People's Revolutionary Party (the southern VWP organization) was mentioned it was assumed to be under the control of "North Vietnamese".

⁴⁴ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, pp.32-38.

passed resolution 15 which approved the principle of using revolutionary violence in support of the political struggle movement.⁴⁵

Both sets of accounts concerning the origins of the NFL fell into the semantic trap discussed at length in the introduction. In order to prove "aggression from the north", official U.S. and RVN interpretations stressed the crucial importance of the VWP's 15th Plenum which they erroneously set in May 1959.⁴⁶ They also pointed to the Third National Congress of the Lao Dong Party. Those who argued that the impetus for the creation of the NFL came from southerners stressed the importance of the March 1960 meeting of ex-Resistance veterans. They pointed out that this meeting occurred before the Party's National Congress approved the formation of a Front. Jean Lacouture has argued, for example:

the actual birth of the National Liberation Front must be traced back to March 1960. At that time a group of the old resistance fighters assembled in Zone D (eastern Cochinchina), issued a proclamation calling the prevailing situation 'intolerable' for the people as a result of Diem's actions, and called upon patriots to regroup with a view toward ultimate collective action...the little Congress of March 1960 was in some ways the 'general call' for the creation of the Front, the signal that, coming from the South, was to force the government in the North to assume its responsibility.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ For example, Tinh Hinh va Nhiem Vu 59 (The Situation and Tasks for 1959) the Nam Bo Regional Committee's guidelines for 1959, drafted in late 1958, argued that the revolution could be advanced by peaceful means (as previously) by exploiting the contradictions in South Viet-Nam.

⁴⁶ For a discussion of the 15th Plenum see: Noam Chomsky, "The Pentagon Papers as Propaganda and History" in Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn, editors, The Pentagon Papers: Critical Essays (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), Vol. 5, pp.179-84; and King C. Chen, "Hanoi's Three Decisions and the Escalation of the Vietnam War", Political Science Quarterly (Summer 1975), Vol. 90, No. 2, pp.245-48.

⁴⁷ Lacouture, Vietnam: Between Two Truces, op.cit., pp.53-54; and Lacouture, "Le F.N.L. est-il bien le 'Satellite' de Hanoi?", Le Monde (April 4, 1965), pp.1-2.

This thesis has tried to present the case that the decision to create the National Front for the Liberation of South Viet-Nam in December 1960 was the outcome of a complex interplay of four sets of factors which operated over time: (1) the international environment, (2) domestic developments in the North, (3) the state of the Party's underground in the South and (4) the policies of the Diem regime and its American ally. For purpose of drawing conclusions it will be convenient to view these factors as operating with varying degrees of influence on three levels: the international, national and decision-making levels.⁴⁸

B. THREE LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

1. The International Level of Analysis

In 1954 the DRVN was born into an international system which was dominated by the power and Cold War rivalries of the Soviet Union and the United States. As a junior member of the socialist camp and as a small, divided and weak Southeast Asian nation the DRVN had little leverage to alter the policies of either Russia or China when these ran counter to the DRVN's declared objectives.

It would appear that in order to achieve its national objectives (territorial security, economic rehabilitation and growth, reunification, the end of foreign interference, etc.) the DRVN had little choice but to adhere loyally to the policies of the socialist bloc headed by the Soviet Union. Indeed Russian and Chinese aid in the early years was indispensable in averting famine and in restoring the North's

⁴⁸ These have been adapted from Singer, "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations", op.cit.

war-ravaged economy. Membership in the socialist camp also afforded the DRVN with a measure of protection against attack by the United States, which was a constant fear of Hanoi's leaders.

The DRVN's attempts during 1954-56 to reunify Viet-Nam under the terms of the 1954 Geneva Agreements foundered on the central fact that neither superpower found it in its interest to support such a settlement. The United States was hostile to the Geneva Conference from the beginning. Immediately as a political settlement was achieved the U.S. adopted a policy of shoring up the Diem government and abetting it in its refusal to hold negotiations with the North. The Soviet Union, although willing to grant limited support for DRVN initiatives, was in fact more concerned with obtaining concessions from the West in Europe than in pushing the issue of Vietnamese unification.

China too gave limited support to DRVN initiatives. And France, which had some economic interests in the North, quickly divested itself of all responsibilities by withdrawing the French Expeditionary Corps prior to the July 1956 electoral deadline. In the face of these developments the attitudes of India and other Asian states, however sympathetic, was hardly decisive.

The DRVN adjusted to these setbacks by adopting a long-range policy of building up international contacts and by awaiting more favourable circumstances. These arose in 1957 as a result of the deepening Sino-Soviet dispute. It will be recalled that the solidarity of the socialist bloc was shaken as a result of Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin and as a result of the Polish troubles and Hungarian uprising of 1956. In November 1957 the CCP and the CPSU aired their differences

on several matters, including the issue of peaceful or non-peaceful transition to socialism before a meeting of twelve Communist and Workers' parties in Moscow. China's subsequent militant line in foreign affairs throughout 1958 created a set of circumstances which enabled the VWP leadership to move without the previous constraints. According to a Party review of this period:

If one took the world situation as the model for the policy line (duong loi) for our country, which had its own special characteristics, it would be inappropriate to do so even if the revolution in a particular country depended greatly on the international situation. Concerning the possibility of advancing revolution by peaceful means even the resolution (ngghi quyet) of the 20th Congress of the CPSU stated that it could be achieved only in certain countries which already had democratic institutions. South Viet Nam is an American colony dominated by the My-Diem system; it therefore has its own laws governing revolution. It cannot take the general guidelines concerning the world for its own...according to declaration (tuyen ngon) 12, the Party stated: 'Whether the Revolution is violent or not will not depend on us, but on the attitude of our enemy'.⁴⁹

In January 1959, after two years of economic progress and after strengthening contacts with socialist bloc countries, the leaders of the DRVN were in a position to approve a more militant policy in the south. In short, the international constraints which applied in an earlier period were partially removed. The new low-risk policy which the VWP adopted was designed to take advantage of this. As the situation in

⁴⁹ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, p.32. This statement was made in light of the "8I" (January 8th?) conference. According to Working Paper, Appendices, Item 301, p.6, "[t]he external international situation exerts a very important but not decisive influence on the situation. The general strategic responsibilities of the world also exert an influence and exert a degree of control as do the revolutionary experiences of enlightened countries but neither are decisive factors. In addition the struggle procedures of each phase of the revolution in a given country will not be identical".

neighbouring Laos deteriorated,⁵⁰ bringing first American then Soviet involvement, the VWP undertook bolder steps. In late 1960 the Kong Le coup in Laos⁵¹ coupled with the November attempted coup against Diem⁵² provided the climate for a continuation of these militant actions. In December 1960 the NFL was formed with the twin purpose of overthrowing the Diem government and liberating the south from the influence of the American imperialists. In short, Viet-Nam became an example of a "just war of national liberation" to which the Chinese and Russians could give some measure of support.

2. The National Level of Analysis

The second level of analysis, the nation-state level, focuses primarily on internal developments within a country in order to explain policy outcomes. In the case of Viet-Nam two features in particular appear significant: (1) the role of the Marxist-Leninist Viet-Nam Workers' Party (its ideology and previous experiences) and (2) the fact of national partition.

The VWP, as a Marxist-Leninist Party, subscribes to the two stage theory of revolution: a national democratic phase followed by a phase of socialist revolution. In this respect

⁵⁰ In January a border dispute broke out between Laos and the DRVN; in May the Royal Lao Army attempted to surround and disarm two Pathet Lao battalions. These events, as well as U.S. support for the Laotian right-wing precipitated a crisis which caused grave concern in Hanoi and Peking. Cf. Arthur Dommen, Conflict in Laos: The Politics of Neutralization, Revised Edition (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), pp.117-41.

⁵¹ Hugh Toye, Laos: Buffer State or Battleground (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp.138-70. The coup took place on August 9th.

⁵² The coup in Viet-Nam occurred on the same day as a right-wing coup in Vientiane: November 11th. See: Reuters and AFP dispatches from Saigon in The Times of India (November 12, 1960).

one of the most important components of VWP ideology is the idea of a front (mat tran), a broad union of various social classes, suited to "the objective circumstances" of each historical period.⁵³ Thus in the Resistance War the Viet Minh-Lien Viet Fronts served as the main instruments of national mobilization. Because the historic period was one of armed struggle, the role of the People's Army was also important. During the 1954-56 period, when the VWP shifted to political struggle, the Fatherland Front served as the prime organization for mobilization in the north. It never became a mass organization in the south, mainly because of the hostile environment in which the Party organization had to operate. Nevertheless it existed in embryo, ready to expand should the Diem government collapse and a coalition favourably disposed towards reunification take its place.

The leaders of the Viet-Nam Workers' Party, after eight long years of fighting the French only achieved partial success. As a result of the 1954 Geneva Conference they were given control of Viet-Nam north of the 17th parallel. The partitioning of Viet-Nam must be seen as a fundamental factor influencing Party policy because for the first time it became impossible for the entire Party to pursue the same objectives throughout the country. In brief Party leaders asserted that there were two main interrelated objectives in the post-1954 period: socialist construction in the north and the carrying out of a national democratic revolution in the south. The decision to accept power in a divided Viet-Nam and the

⁵³ Cf. P.J. Honey, "The National United Front in Vietnam", Studies in Comparative Communism (January 1969), Vol. 2, No. 1, pp.69-95.

decision to pursue two objectives simultaneously almost proved impossible. In the period 1954-55, when it appeared that reunification could be achieved by peaceful means under the terms of the Geneva Agreements, the contradictions in this dual approach were less evident. Afterwards, however, the difficulty of carrying out these two objectives became apparent as the U.S. support for the Republic of Viet-Nam upset the power ratio within Viet-Nam.

In the north the VWP was faced with the immense task of restoring a war-damaged economy and avoiding famine. The pace of recovery depended not only on the success of Party policies and programmes but also on the nature and extent of foreign assistance. In 1956 the Party faced a serious crisis in the aftermath of its land reform campaign (a campaign necessitated by the ideology of the VWP leaders to carry out a socialist revolution). The ramifications of this crisis, which spurred a revolt among the intellectuals as well as a peasant uprising in Quynh Luu district, extended for several years, draining the Party's energies and resources.

Simultaneously the VWP had to face the impact of U.S. and RVN policies in the south. As the Diem regime grew stronger, and as U.S. assistance increased, the ability of the VWP underground to respond diminished accordingly. The problem for the VWP, of course, was to cope with both sets of problems at the same time. In late 1956 a new policy was devised which continued to place priority on the consolidation of the north (economic stability and development, public order and security, regularization and modernization of PAVN, etc.). Its other components consisted of maintaining and developing the movement

in the south and winning international sympathy and support (which contributed to both objectives). After two years of implementing this policy (1957-58) progress in the north had reached such a level where it was now possible to contemplate a step-up in the movement in the south.

There, meanwhile, Party leaders faced a dilemma. On the one hand the repressive policies of the Diem regime (military operations, security laws, anti-Communist denunciation campaigns, etc.) severely weakened the Party. On the other hand, other policies of the RVN (land reform, resettlement, regroupment in the highlands, press censorship, etc.) raised discontent and also the potential for rebellion as group after group became alienated from the incumbent government.

Restrictions on the use of armed force severely hampered the Party's underground in its attempts to strike back. The Party therefore relied on the armed sect forces and, in 1957, in an extermination of traitors programme (tru gian) carried out by armed propaganda teams. Both policies achieved mixed success. In 1959, therefore, Party cadres in both the north and south argued that sufficient progress had been made in building up the DRVN and in obtaining international support to permit a change in tactics in the south. The use of armed violence was sanctioned as a counter to the actions of the Diem regime. In order to avoid U.S. retaliation on the DRVN, the movement in the south had to rely as much as possible on its own resources. The creation of the NFL was designed to demonstrate that people in the south supported the overthrow of Diem and the end of American influence.

3. The Decision-Making Level

The decision-making level of analysis attempts to explain policy outcomes by focusing on the decision-making structure of the country being studied and on the role of various organizations and individuals within that structure. In the case of Viet-Nam it is immediately apparent that the key decision-making structure rests within the Viet-Nam Workers' Party. This thesis has focused on the regular plenary sessions of the VWP's Central Committee during the period 1954-60. It is evident that since the Central Committee met on average only twice a year, that the implementation of policy on a regular basis was the responsibility of the Politburo. However because of the nature of the data, it has not been possible to analyze thoroughly the role of this group (only three crucial meetings have been discussed in the text: September 1954, November-December 1956 and May 1959).

During the time period under consideration VWP policy towards the south was set at the plenary session of the Central Committee at which the views of the subordinate Nam Bo Regional Committee were considered. Decision-making was an interactive process by which Party officials on the Central Committee had to consider the demands of various sectors in the light of existing priorities and limited resources. Contrary to the views of some writers,⁵⁴ the VWP organization in the south did not act independently of the Central Committee. In fact in early 1959 after the VWP Central Committee had approved the use

⁵⁴ Kahin and Lewis, The United States in Vietnam, op.cit., pp.113-20; Lacouture, Vietnam: Between Two Truces, op.cit., pp.53-57; and Devillers, "The Struggle for the Unification of Vietnam", op.cit., pp.18-20.

of armed violence, the Nam Bo Regional Committee was still restricting its use in the south while at the same time misleading the Central Committee about the pressures building up there in favour of armed struggle.⁵⁵

Although complete data is lacking it is also evident that Le Duan played a key role within the VWP Central Committee. During 1954-56 as secretary of the Nam Bo Regional Committee he consistently advocated the employment of armed force. His proposals were not accepted in their entirety because of the pressing nature of problems in the DRVN. It was only with the demise of Truong Chinh following the land reform campaign that Le Duan was brought into the inner-circle of decision-makers where he tipped the balance in favour of greater commitment to the revolutionary movement in the south. Not only did Le Duan draft the important policy guidelines embodied in "Duong Loi Cach Mang Mien Nam" but he also submitted the crucial report to the VWP's 15th Plenum.

By the time of the VWP's Third National Congress in September 1960 the influence of the southern lobby (and the military) was clear in appointments to the Secretariat and Central Committee. Le Duan himself was appointed First Secretary of the Party.⁵⁶ Thereafter the VWP further increased the tempo of revolutionary activity in the south.

⁵⁵ Tinh Hinh Nam Bo, pp.32-33, which states, "[m]oreover, until the beginning of 1959, the Party's Regional Committee still hesitated to explain its own problems and those of the Party organization (Dang bo) to the Central Committee".

⁵⁶ "Intelligence summary on Lao Dong Central Committee membership of the Central Office for South Vietnam", Working Paper, Appendices, Item 208, p.1 states: "[d]uring the Lao Dong Party Congress of 1960, almost a dozen southern or

(cont'd)

Finally, the material presented in this thesis has indicated that the disputes within the Central Committee have more likely been based on the relative priorities to be assigned to the consolidation of the north and the national democratic revolution in the south than over pro-Soviet or pro-Chinese orientations.

In conclusion, it would appear that the birth of the National Front for the Liberation of South Viet-Nam was a far more complex process than previous writers have indicated. In order to understand why the NFL was created in December 1960 it is necessary to weigh the influence of four major factors on the decision-making process of the Viet-Nam Workers' Party:

- (1) the constraints imposed by the international environment,
- (2) the process of economic, social and political developments in the north,
- (3) the success of the VWP's underground in the south and
- (4) the policies of the RVN and its American allies.

56 cont.

central Vietnamese were made members of the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party. This group of men was subsequently chosen to form the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) [a mistranslation of the Vietnamese "trung uong cuc mien nam" which I have translated as Central Committee Directorate for Southern Viet-Nam] as an extension of the Lao Dong Party in South Vietnam". See also: "Agents from North Lead Viet Cong", The Sunday Telegraph [London] (July 29, 1962), p.24 which states that a DRVN official in Geneva inadvertently revealed the names of four of the individuals (Nguyen Van Cuc, Pham Thai Buong, Le Toan Thu and Pham Van Dang).

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